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# *Illinois Issues*

*A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield*

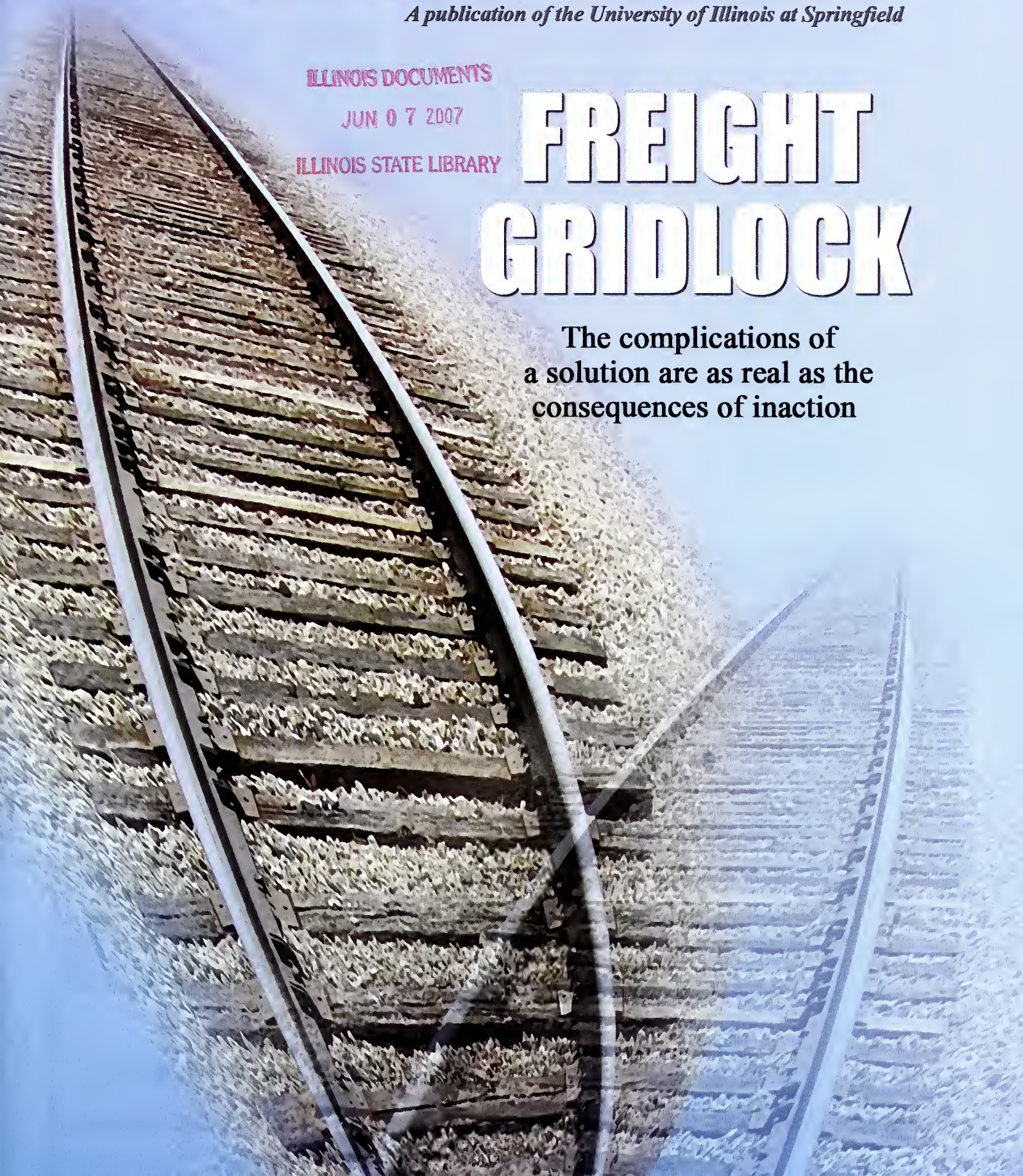
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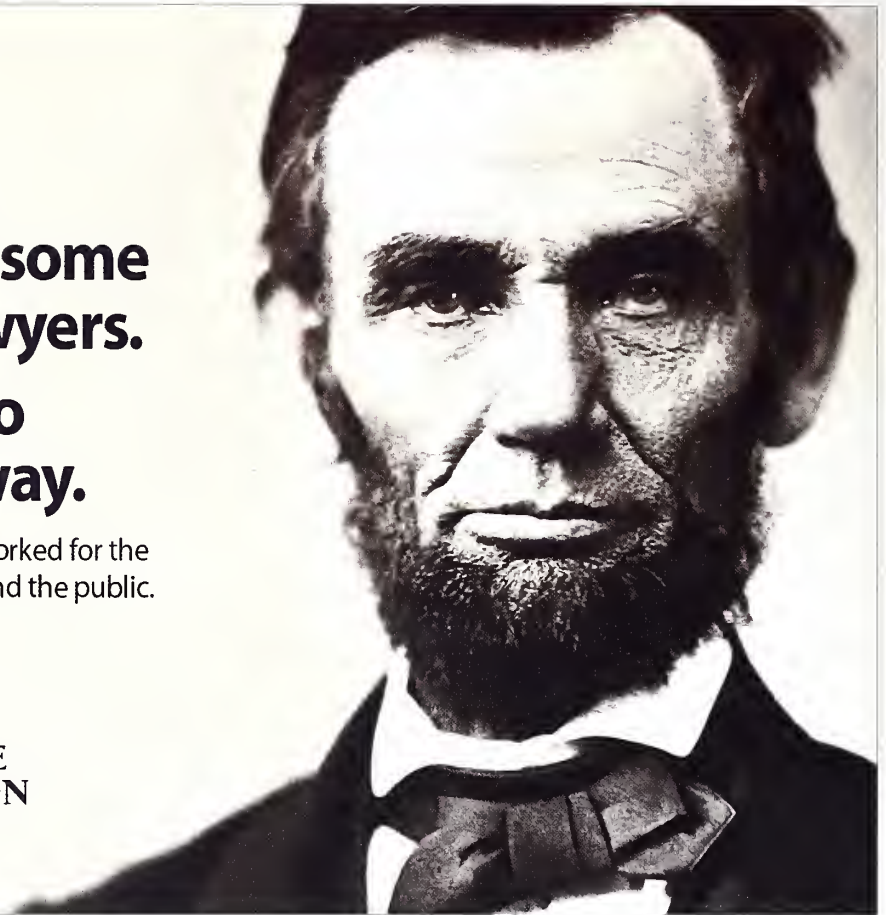
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Peggy Boyer Long



## Two books, two lives, describe the past. They might also explain the present

by Peggy Boyer Long

*"It was true that over the years I consistently evoked strong feelings, but voters had elected a fighter. What's wrong with confronting a problem and fighting for the right solution?"*

Dan Walker  
*The Maverick and the Machine:  
Governor Dan Walker Tells His Story*

Illinois political history is a long-running study in character. It's a morality play intoned by a Greek chorus and a solitary plea from the wings. It's heroism and tragedy, and sometimes comedy, in an endless series of acts.

We are reminded of that this year as two Illinois political figures, key players in back-to-back dramas, return to the stage. W. Russell Arrington, the late legislative leader, is the subject of a biography, and Dan Walker, one of the state's four living ex-governors, has written an autobiography.

Two books, two lives, tell us much about the past. They might also say something about the present, though complexity of character and ambiguity of plot would challenge Euripides.

Arrington set the scene for much that followed. And in this issue of the magazine, Christopher Wills, a Statehouse correspondent for The Associated

Press, reviews *Powerhouse: Arrington from Illinois* by political biographer Taylor Pensoneau.

Arrington, a Republican, began staffing the General Assembly, which put that branch on a footing with the governor's office and professionalized policy deliberations. By 1969, he was Senate president, and that's when former Republican Gov. Richard Ogilvie tapped him to sponsor Illinois' income tax.

In countless ways, both men played major roles in pushing Illinois into the modern era. Yet the tax, a gutsy move, is credited with helping to end their careers. Arrington never again took the political lead.

Wills notes that Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Democratic Senate President Emil Jones Jr. must be mulling this history, the similarities and the differences, as they push a new revenue source, a plan that would constitute the biggest tax hike in state history.

Walker, too, in his autobiography, *The Maverick and the Machine*, recalls lamenting that there wasn't anyone with the "stature and statesmanship" of an Arrington in the Senate GOP caucus — though it's difficult to imagine these men sitting across a table from one another.

I wasn't around to see Arrington in

action, but as a Statehouse reporter for public radio, I did cover the back half of Walker's administration, through 1975 and 1976. It can be said, most charitably, that Walker wasn't one for sitting down and horse-trading. He saw politics and governance in blacks and whites and demonized anyone who disagreed.

Walker campaigned as a champion of "the people," those mythical little guys who work hard and hope officials will listen and do right. His descriptions of the 1,197-mile walk across the state and the successful creation of a statewide get-out-the-vote organization during his first race are the most compelling parts of his book. He was a long shot who had no Democratic Party backing. And he was the first to pull off a lone-wolf, made-for-TV campaign — and administration.

He was called confrontational, though he prefers the term fighter. And fight he did. He fought the Chicago Democrats, who, in those days, really did constitute an autocratic political machine under the control of Mayor Richard J. Daley. He fought lawmakers. He fought reporters.

As governor, he was the first to bypass Springfield and the Statehouse press corps, taking his message on the road. In an effort to control the way his budgets

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were portrayed, he would drop them on lawmakers and reporters at the last possible moment.

To his credit, when he did brief the media, he went through a budget agency by agency, line item by line item. He was a hands-on manager with a detailed knowledge of what was going on in his agencies. A former Navy man, he compared reforming state government to turning a large ship.

Yet Walker governed as a fighter long after the fight seemed relevant. And, in the end, this brought him down. He had natural enemies, true, but he also had enemies of his own

making. And by the end of his first term, he had alienated many of his early supporters, especially liberal Democrats. Some turned on him after he signed the measure reinstituting the death penalty. But many simply tired of his style.

After he lost the campaign for a second term, Walker left his wife and began a new life, one that led to federal prison at age 65. The man who had seen himself as a lone fighter was then truly alone.

The arc of this life and career is compelling and poignant, as is any Greek tragedy. □

Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at [peggyboy@aol.com](mailto:peggyboy@aol.com).

## Déjà vu

### A matter of style

Gov. Rod Blagojevich has his work cut out for him in the final days, or weeks, of the legislative session. He dropped a fully drawn plan for near-universal health care and increased education spending — and a major tax overhaul to fund it — on lawmakers and the media, then described the ensuing battle as Armageddon.

He cast this as a fight between those in the right and those in the wrong. The ones wearing the black hats would be the corporate fat cats, the lobbyists who wear Gucci shoes and the legislators who hang with them.

As of two weeks before the constitutional deadline to draw up a budget, Blagojevich's plan wasn't faring well. His pugilistic style of governance appeared to be wearing thin, too. But in mid-May, as we went to press, no one could count him out. This is a governor who has, to date, successfully demonized lazy state workers, Soviet-style bureaucrats and reporters who make small children cry.

Enemies make good politics. At least for a time.

Peggy Boyer Long



At the podium is Kim Clarke Maisch, Illinois director of the National Federation of Independent Business, who led an April rally opposing Gov. Rod Blagojevich's proposed gross receipts tax, the crux of his spending plans for the new fiscal year that begins July 1. As of mid-May, lawmakers weren't happy with his proposal either. In a nonbinding resolution, the Illinois House voted down the gross receipts tax 107-0, with seven members voting present.



# Illinois Issues

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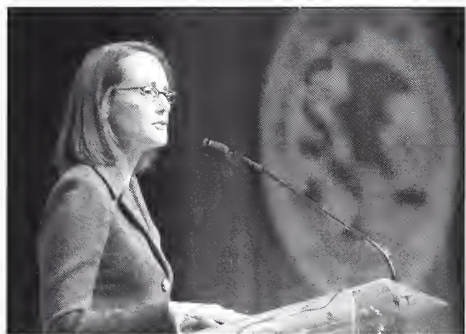
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*Credits:* Our cover illustration was designed by Diana L. C. Nelson, Illinois Issues' art director.

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Bethany Carson



## A 37-member majority may not be as super as it first appears

by Bethany Carson

The 95th Illinois General Assembly began with high expectations for the Senate Democrats, whose majority grew by six members in last fall's elections. But so far they haven't looked like the agenda-setters they were expected to be.

Senate President Emil Jones Jr. has 37 members on his side of the aisle. That's one more than the 36 votes needed to craft a state budget, approve a major capital plan and override a gubernatorial veto without a single Republican vote. Senate Democrats haven't had such a large percentage of the votes since the mid-1970s.

Thirty years ago, the Senate included loyalists to then-Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago and the so-called Crazy Eight independent and downstate senators. This Democratic Caucus is just as diverse, says Mike Lawrence, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Despite the current Senate's Democratic "super majority," though, the size and diversity of its caucus could actually disrupt their chances of becoming a unified force.

"The narrower the majority, the greater the case for the caucus being cohesive," says Lawrence, who also was a longtime Statehouse journalist and a senior policy adviser to former Republican Gov. Jim Edgar. "If you have an extraordinary majority, people are more inclined to leave the reservation."

---

### *The regional and political differences among Senate Democrats were on display in some of the most attention-getting issues this spring.*

In fact, before mid-May, the regional and political differences among Senate Democrats were on display in some of the most attention-getting issues this spring: skyrocketing electricity rates and tax reform.

Since the start of the spring session, Jones has been at odds with some of the members of his Democratic Caucus over those two issues. And how the Senate president decides to lead his chamber will determine the likelihood of compromise on either.

But there's an additional factor that Jones has to confront that wasn't there 30 years ago: diversity among the Chicago-area lawmakers. Jones would have to pull in five of this year's Democratic Party pickups who represent suburban Chicago districts. Some of those districts lean more Republican and could influence whether the new members vote in line with Chicago Democrats or vote in the interests of their local businesses and more conservative constituents.

Two other first-time senators represent central Illinois districts, another region not guaranteed to follow the Chicago-centric partisan line. And they haven't. Their constituents applied pressure as soon as electricity bills went up. A nearly 10-year freeze on electricity rates expired in January, and most downstate residents served by Ameren Illinois have experienced higher rates than Commonwealth Edison customers in northern Illinois.

Jones opposes an idea to roll back and refreeze electricity rates at their 1997 levels. He went so far as to outmaneuver one of his party members, Sen. Gary Forby of Benton, to ensure that ComEd was left out of legislation to freeze rates.

But new senators from the Chicago suburbs and from downstate are more likely to support the effort to freeze electricity rates again, Lawrence says. Downstate legislators get the most angry phone calls because Ameren cut off a discount formerly given to customers who heat their homes with all electric power. Downstate and suburban lawmakers also are more visible in their communities and likely to be more sensitive to public opinion and feel more pressure from local businesses.

Local pressure is also reflected in downstate lawmakers' stance against the governor's idea for a gross receipts tax, which is expected to generate more than \$7 billion to pay for near-universal health insurance. It has support from education





# BRIEFLY



Periodical cicada

## EMERGENCE 2007

### 17-year cicadas spark intrigue and study

**B**y the time this magazine emerges, many northern readers will be surrounded by thousands of crawly friends with six legs and insistent voices. No matter how Illinoisans react to them, the periodical, or 17-year, cicadas will command attention this month. The large black-and-red insects have lived quietly underground since 1990 in nymph form, drinking sap from tree roots, and they'll crawl from the earth in huge numbers to molt into adults, sing from the treetops and find mates. Some areas could have a concentration of up to 1.5 million cicadas per acre, says Dan Summers, entomologist and collection manager at The Field Museum, which is holding a cicada exhibit this summer. "The noise [of all the males singing] is just under the decibel level of a 747 jet flying over."

The mass emergence is an evolutionary adaptation so that the sheer numbers of the long-lived bug make it impossible for their many predators to eat them all, says Summers. "If you're right in the middle of it, the emergence can be really spectacular."

The cicadas emerging this year throughout northern Illinois are known as "Brood XIII" and are actually three similar species that have synchronized their life cycles. Most will be found where large, deciduous trees are still intact. All the fuss will be over about three weeks later, when they finish laying the eggs of the next generation in twigs and die.

Plans for outdoor weddings may need to be changed, but otherwise the insects do no harm. Cicadas don't bite or sting, and they have little impact on trees. In fact, the nymphs help aerate lawns as they tunnel up through the soil.

While some find the cicadas annoying or creepy, others are fascinated and planning to study the infrequent phenomenon. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has started a cicada citizen science effort to help map the emergence. And a dad and his two sons in suburban Oak Park have set up a blog and Web site devoted to a local cicada hunt.

"To think that something so amazing like this could be happening right in front of our house," says Erie Gyllenhaal, the webmaster of *saltthesandbox.org*. "There's all this nature going on, and we're just a mile west of Chicago."

Gyllenhaal and his sons have been digging in their garden for nymphs and looking for cicada burrows in the area. "We want to go out and find things out for ourselves. We'll probably be finding the first cicadas coming out early."

In Lake County, Melissa Senf, cicada educator with the forest preserve district, is touring throughout the summer in a Cicada Mobile to teach children about cicadas through hands-on exhibits at school and library events.

"They've had a lot of fun," she says. "By the end, [the kids] seem pretty excited."

Soil temperature is thought to help determine when nymphs emerge. Predictions for the start of emergence range from May 22 to June 3.

"I've had quite a few phone calls with people asking when they should leave town," says Summers. "Other people have been calling from California, wanting to come here to see it."

It'll be 2024 before the spectacle occurs again.

Vera Leopold

Photograph © Kim Karpeles



Kids try out the cicada look in a Cicada Mobile activity.

### Catch cicada mania

Forest preserves and museums across the Chicagoland area have planned a flurry of activities and exhibits timed to coincide with the periodical cicadas' reappearance in late May and early June. "Don't miss this special presentation," reads one flyer from Lake County. "It'll be another 17 years before we offer it again." Check out the events below to experience and learn more about this natural marvel.

- **The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum** in Chicago is holding "Magicicada: The Magic Cicada Exhibit," a multimedia exhibition with a collection and photographs of cicadas. Free with general admission, it runs until July 29. Cicada sing-alongs, where kids can play their own cicada instruments, take place weekends in June. See [www.chias.org](http://www.chias.org) for more details.

- **Lake County Forest Preserves** has planned a free weekend festival of events and family-oriented activities June 3 from 1-5 p.m. at Ryerson Woods, entitled Cicada Mania 2007. Guided cicada hikes to witness nymphs emerging and learn the three species' songs will take place June 9 and 23. See [www.lcfd.org/cicadas/](http://www.lcfd.org/cicadas/) for the full listing.

- **The Field Museum** is hosting a temporary exhibit, "Cicadas and Emerald Ash Borers," through Labor Day. It includes a collection of specimens and pieces of international cicada art. The museum also features cicadas in its permanent, kid-friendly "Underground Adventure" exhibit. Call (312) 922-9410 or visit [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org).

- **The Grove National Historic Landmark** in Glenview will have a "Cicadas!" exhibit starting June 1. Learn about their biology, behavior and song and see collections that date back to 1870. Call (847) 299-6096 to find out more. □

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>



# LEGISLATIVE CHECKLIST

*The legislature faces a constitutional deadline of May 31 for approving legislation and a state budget, but negotiations are expected to stretch into the summer. All measures called for debate after the deadline will require more votes for approval, meaning House Democrats will need Republican support to advance a state budget. The Senate has enough Democrats to approve a budget without GOP votes.*

*There are other issues lawmakers are trying to tie up before they adjourn.*

## **Statewide smoking ban**

Illinois may soon be a smoke-free state. Both chambers approved a measure that would ban smoking in public throughout the state. If signed by the governor, smoking would be illegal in bars, bowling alleys, restaurants and riverboats. The measure aims to level the economic playing field among municipalities, but it also would override local governments' authority to approve weaker rules on smoking in public places.

A separate measure introduced in the Senate would allow smoking in casinos within 10 miles of the border for five years. However, if a neighboring state passes a smoking ban, the casinos would be subject to the Illinois ban.

## **Primary elections**

The state's primary would be moved from the third Tuesday in March to the first Tuesday in February under legislation that moved to the governor's desk. If he signs it, Illinois would gain more political muscle in choosing presidential candidates. House Speaker Michael Madigan sponsored the idea to further U.S. Sen. Barack Obama's presidential bid.

## **Horse meat ban**

Horse slaughtering would be banned under a measure that has moved to the governor's desk. Illinois currently is the only state that allows horses to be killed for meat. It's illegal to sell horse meat as food in the United States; however, the meat is shipped, sold and eaten overseas. If the governor signs it, Illinois' processing plant in DeKalb

would have to switch to another farm animal, such as cattle, or close its doors.

## **Gaming**

Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat, proposes adding slot machines at racetracks and creating four new Chicago-area casinos. If approved by both chambers, the state could gain 37,000 additional gaming positions and generate \$1.3 billion to \$3 billion in new revenue each year.

## **Immigrant drivers**

Individuals who don't have Social Security numbers would have the right to apply for driving certificates under a measure approved by the House. More Illinois drivers would have a chance to learn the rules of the road at state driving facilities, proponents say. If successful in the Senate and signed by the governor, undocumented immigrants would be able to purchase auto insurance and drive legally in the state.

## **Ethics reform**

Chicago Democratic Rep. John Fritchey's measure banning pay-to-play politics won House approval. Under the legislation supported by state Comptroller Dan Hynes, state employees would be prohibited from accepting perks from potential contractors. Individuals bidding for state contracts worth more than \$10,000 also would have to disclose their campaign contribution history. Any business with state contracts worth more than \$25,000 couldn't donate to a candidate's campaign if the candidate was involved in awarding the contracts.

## **Judicial funding**

The state would provide funding for appellate and Supreme Court judicial elections under a measure approved in the Senate. Candidates could decide whether to use the public dollars. The measure, sponsored by Sen. Kwame Raoul, a Chicago Democrat, also would set campaign contribution limits for judicial races.

The effort follows public scrutiny of

spending in a state Supreme Court race. Comptroller Hynes said in a printed statement: "The public deserves to have confidence that in a court of law, no matter who you are, or where you come from, you will receive a fair shake. It is sometimes difficult for people to maintain that confidence when they see special interests contributing large sums to judicial campaigns."

## **Tax reform**

Low- and moderate-income homeowners would be expected to receive property tax relief and tax credits under a measure sponsored by Sen. James Meeks, a Chicago Democrat, and Rep. David Miller, a Lynwood Democrat. The measure calls for an increase in state income tax rates from 3 percent to 5 percent and expansion of sales taxes to services. If approved, the measure would increase spending per student and create a \$300 million venture pool for new programs to increase student achievement in struggling schools. The proposal is an alternative to Gov. Rod Blagojevich's proposal to establish a new business tax.

## **Criminal code**

Under a Senate measure, the state's criminal code would be edited for the first time in 40 years. A panel of law experts spent two years drafting recommendations to clear the state's criminal code of redundant and unconstitutional language. Proponents say the measure would ease the backlog of cases in the state's judicial system.

## **Cash assistance**

The cash grant awarded to needy families would increase by 15 percent under a measure sponsored by Rep. Elga Jefferies, a Chicago Democrat. The measure won House approval. If approved by both chambers and signed by the governor, the increase would be the first in nine years. The number of households participating in the federally funded program has dropped more than 80 percent over the past decade, according to a March 2007 report by the Illinois comptroller's office.

### **HIV testing**

Rep. Mary Flowers, a Chicago Democrat, sponsored four measures requiring HIV testing for pregnant mothers, prison inmates, school-aged teenagers and children.

Both chambers approved Flowers' measure requiring all expectant mothers to receive HIV counseling before getting tested for the disease. If a pregnant woman refuses testing, that would be documented in her medical records.

Under a separate measure, HIV testing would be included in children's school physicals. Parents would be able to refuse testing for their children, but it would be documented in the students' school records. Another measure would require the State Board of Health to set up HIV testing schedules for school-aged teens.

In another measure, prison inmates would receive HIV tests upon entering the system. If they test positive, the Department of Corrections would pay for medical treatment. The financial responsibility would shift to the Department of Healthcare and Family Services after inmates are released.

### **DUI roadside markers**

The House approved a measure to establish uniform roadside markers to identify where people were killed by drunk drivers. Victims' relatives would be able to file an application with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

### **Iraq war escalation**

Both chambers are considering a nonbinding measure aimed at discouraging President George W. Bush from deploying additional troops to Iraq. The resolution also urges Congress to approve legislation that would block Bush from spending additional revenue on escalating the war without approval.

### **Civil unions**

Same-sex couples would enjoy the legal protections of married couples under a measure sponsored by Rep. Greg Harris, a Chicago Democrat. Illinois would join three states, Connecticut, New Jersey and Vermont.

Deanese Williams-Harris

## THE GOVERNOR'S WISH LIST

*Illinois Issues* is following the progress of Gov. Rod Blagojevich's initiatives for fiscal year 2008. More immediate updates will be available on the magazine's blog at <http://illinoisissuesblog.blogspot.com>.

### Revenue

- **The gross receipts tax**, the backbone of the governor's 2008 initiatives, is a new business tax expected to generate \$7.6 billion a year in net revenue. Businesses that make more than \$2 million in sales annually would be subject to the tax, which is levied on each business input rather than on profit. Businesses generating between \$2 million and \$5 million would receive tax credits. Others would be exempt and pay the corporate income tax until that phases out in four years. The Blagojevich Administration says the gross receipts tax is predictable and fair because it's broad-based and levied at a low rate. Such opponents as the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois State Medical Society say the tax would unfairly tax smaller businesses that generate gross revenue above the threshold.
- **A health insurance tax** would be levied on payrolls of companies that don't offer comprehensive health benefits. The \$1.1 billion generated would pay for the governor's state-sponsored health insurance plan for adults.
- **The Illinois Lottery** would be leased to private investors as a way to generate \$10 billion, which would help pay down \$41 billion in state pension obligations.
- **Pension bonds** would be issued to generate another \$16 billion to reduce pension liabilities. Investment returns would be used to repay the debt, his administration says.

### Education

- **\$10 billion** would go to education over the next four years, starting with \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2008. Some of that money would increase the guaranteed minimum spent per student by \$686, bringing it to \$6,020. The plan also would increase the amount the state reimburses local districts for special education teachers for the first time since 1985 and expand the governor's first-term initiative to offer all-day kindergarten to more students. Early childhood education would get \$70 million to expand state-sponsored preschool for children of low- and middle-income families and \$10 million for all-day kindergarten.
- **\$1 billion** would be used to provide property tax relief.

### Health care

- **Illinois Covered** would make three health insurance plans available to all Illinois adults. One would provide state subsidies to help people pay for private insurance plans if they don't get medical benefits through their employers. Another would offer rebates to help pay monthly insurance premiums of employer-based plans. The third would expand the public aid program FamilyCare for single adults who have children or for families with incomes at 400 percent of the federal poverty level (\$80,000 a year for a family of four). As proposed, the plan would cost the state \$2.1 billion a year and would be paid partially by a 3 percent payroll tax on businesses that don't offer health benefits to employees.

### Road and school construction

- **\$1.5 billion** in bonds would allow school districts to improve their buildings.
- **\$3 billion** in bonds would pay for road construction projects.



## Critics say state is slow on death penalty follow-up

Illinois continues to be stuck in moratorium limbo years after former Gov. George Ryan halted executions in the state.

A 2007 report released by the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty charges state lawmakers with failing to follow up on recommendations made by the Commission on Capital Punishment, formed by Ryan. According to the report, 75 percent of the commission's recommendations have yet to flower into legislation.

The coalition's report chastises the state for being slow to act on the commission's recommendation to create a panel responsible for reviewing potential death penalty cases. The group also wants the state to open an independent crime lab to examine forensic evidence found at crime scenes, as well as take steps to prevent coerced confessions, witness misidentification and the use of snitching as an incentive for inmates to knock time off their sentences.

Eleven death sentences have been handed down in Illinois since the moratorium, according to the report, while dozens of capital cases have been thrown out in Cook County.

However, racial disparity in capital cases is still an issue. Black men account for 60 percent of all Cook County inmates on Death Row. Statewide, they make up 69 percent of capital case defendants.

Nationally, more than 120 people have been released from Death Row with proof of innocence, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Death Penalty Information Center. The group says 38 states have the death penalty.

*Deanese Williams-Harris*

## News bite

### Student loan industry under scrutiny

As state attorneys general across the nation probe the student loan industry, a handful of Illinois schools and alumni groups were alleged to have made deals with banks that may not be in the best interests of their students. Alumni associations for the University of Illinois, Illinois State University and Northern Illinois University are among 90 groups under investigation by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo for allegedly agreeing to refer students to Nebraska-based Nelnet Inc. and for receiving payments or gifts for doing so.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported Northern Illinois University received \$17,000 from National City Bank and TCF Bank for printing financial aid material, but the college agreed to stop taking such payments.

Cuomo's probe scrutinizes such practices by the college loan industry as forming "preferred lender" lists and giving perks to colleges that refer students. Some of the largest providers, Sallie Mae, Citibank and Education Finance Partners, agreed to give \$6.5 million to a national fund for educating high school students and their families about the financial aid process.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan joined the effort and announced that Illinois-based DeVry University in Oakbrook Terrace and Career Education Corp. in Hoffman Estates agreed to pay money they received from loan providers to the national fund.

*Bethany Carson*

## Charter Public Schools are lighting the way for Illinois children.

### Keep the Light Shining Bright.

The State Senate has the opportunity to raise the number of charter schools in Illinois. This initiative, spearheaded by Senate President Emil Jones, would advance the state's education reform efforts and provide more quality options to Illinois families.

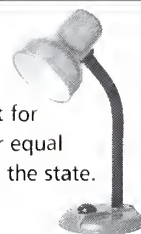
Visit [www.PublicCharters.org](http://www.PublicCharters.org) to learn more.

### Don't Turn Off the Light!

Despite a strong record in improving student achievement for the last decade, charter public schools are still fighting for equal funding and the opportunity to serve more children across the state.

- ▶ Charter public schools receive less funding per student than traditional public schools.
- ▶ There are over 10,000 students on waiting lists for charter public schools, a number that is increasing every day.
- ▶ Charter public schools are open to all, with no entrance exams.
- ▶ 75% of charter public school students come from low-income families.
- ▶ 94% of Chicago's charter public school students are African American or Latino.

Charter public schools give parents a choice, and children a chance.



**NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS**  
1101 14th Street, NW Suite 801  
Washington, DC 20005  
[www.publiccharters.org](http://www.publiccharters.org)



## DNA evidence is key to exonerations

Illinois is a national leader in exonerations using genetic material of DNA to prove wrongful convictions. It's second only to Texas, says Rep. Paul Froehlich, a Schaumburg Republican.

Nationwide, 200 exonerations have been based on genetic material of DNA. Larry Golden of the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project urges more state action.

"The 200th exoneration has sent another powerful message that we need to reexamine the injustices of our system of justice," says Golden, professor of political studies and legal studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield. "For every individual who is in prison who did not commit the crime for which they were convicted, the real criminal still walks the streets of our cities and communities and needs to be apprehended."

Working with the Innocence Project, Froehlich is sponsoring legislation that would create a group to study the causes of wrongful convictions in Illinois. The Senate approved the measure this spring.

"This is not a soft-on-crime thing; this is, let's hold the guilty accountable," Froehlich says. "But at the same time, please, let's not punish somebody that didn't do it."

State Reps. Mary Flowers and Arthur Turner, both Chicago Democrats, are sponsoring two other measures. Flowers wants to set a dollar amount for how much wrongfully convicted inmates would receive when they're released from prison. Turner is considering legislation that would abolish the death penalty, pending information from the 2003 statutory Capital Punishment Reform Study Committee. The committee's final report is expected in 2008.

*Deanese Williams-Harris*

## STUDENT EMMYS Chicago summer program film wins

A film entirely written, produced and edited by high school students from the Chicago Vocational Career Academy through a summer mentorship program is the recipient of one of only seven National Student Awards for Excellence, commonly known as the Student Emmys.

*Photograph courtesy of Roger Badesch*

This marks the first year any Chicago-area student has received the award, which is given by The Foundation of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, the organization that presents the Emmy Awards.

The 17-minute film about two "small-time stick-up" kids, called *The Last Stain*, took the prize for technical achievement, winning top scores in all categories. Three of the 15 students who worked on the film's production traveled to New



*Roger Badesch (far left), radio/TV teacher at Chicago Vocational Career Academy, poses with his senior class. A short film created by 15 of his students in a summer program received a Student Emmy.*

York City last month to receive the award with their teacher and mentor, Roger Badesch.

"It's fantastic. The kids are still overwhelmed," says Badesch, who teaches radio and television at the academy, where students choose a three-year vocational major as sophomores. "I'm not surprised. I always knew the film was award-worthy."

The students spent six weeks creating the film last summer from a script that 17-year-old Tracey Precely had written for Badesch's class. Professional filmmakers brought in the equipment for the project, which was co-sponsored by the Independent Feature Project, a nonprofit that supports independent filmmakers in the Chicago area, and the Chicago Public Schools Summer Jobs Program.

Receiving the award for his work, says Lennell Davis Jr., who was assistant director for the film, co-edited it and composed the soundtrack, was "the best experience of my life — for me to be 18, and to experience something like that and inspire other people."

While the students are mentored for the first week, afterwards the adults are only there to supervise, says Badesch. The students do the work themselves, each taking on multiple jobs that range from director and cameraperson to costumes, locations and casting.

"I'm just here to watch my students use what I've helped them learn in the last couple years," Badesch says. "I always relate it as the purest form of education because the students are doing their own thing. They've taken ownership of it."

Badesch selected Precely's script for the project and chose 15 students from those who applied to participate. In addition to the movie, they produced a "making of" documentary, extra features for the DVD and a Web site, [www.thelaststain.com](http://www.thelaststain.com).

The students are paid for four hours of work a day, but "they all come early and stay late," says Elizabeth Donius, executive director of the Independent Feature Project.

This summer will be the fourth year the nonprofit has held the program in conjunction with Chicago Public Schools. The academy has participated for the past two years, and several students, including Davis, from the 2005 project returned to work on *The Last Stain*. "By the second year, half of them weren't green anymore, and they mentored the younger kids," says Donius. "I'm still flabbergasted by the quality of the film."

"It was really inspiring to see that if you expect a lot of them, they jump. They totally rose to the occasion, and they made a fantastic movie."

Another Chicago-area student, from north-suburban Highland Park High School, also received a Student Emmy. Cyrus Toulabi's weekly pop culture TV show, *What's On Your Screen*, that airs at the school won in the category of Arts & Entertainment, Cultural Affairs. The winners were selected from more than 600 high school entries.

*Vera Leopold*



## TOURISM

### Allerton Park, the hidden treasure of the Seven Wonders

The people of Illinois chose Allerton Park and Retreat Center in Piatt County one of the Seven Wonders of Illinois as part of an Illinois Bureau of Tourism promotion, and that public nod may be many Illinoisans' first knowledge of the former country estate.

"We're a well-kept secret outside a 70-mile radius," says David Schejbal, director of the park. But he hopes that is changing.

The publicity may be coming at an opportune time for this Illinois landmark, as it tries to overcome years of constrained revenues and deferred maintenance. The park needs two big-ticket items: a new road and a new bridge over the Sangamon River.

"We've had money problems in the past, but now we're on the upswing," says Schejbal. "Annual giving is up, revenue from farmland is up, the number of weddings held on the grounds has doubled in the past two years and corporate use of the mansion for conferences and retreats has increased 20 percent a year."

Seven places were chosen by Internet vote, including such constructed venues as Wrigley Field in Chicago and such natural areas as the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Allerton is a combination of natural and designed space. It has 1,500 acres of woodlands interrupted by manicured formal gardens. Birds, deer and other wildlife share space with more than 100 sculptures commissioned by the son of a wealthy Illinois farmer and businessman during his world travels. The English-inspired manor house that oversees the gardens, woods and farmland now welcomes guests from around the world.

Robert Allerton donated the house and grounds to the University of Illinois in 1946 as an educational and research center. He also donated 3,600 acres of farmland for its upkeep. Schejbal says that still is the main stream of revenue to support the natural areas and gardens, but a recent university restructuring now brings funds from other sources to help maintain the entire facility.

"We're not flush, but we're better off than we were," he says.

The park is operated under the guidance of the Office of Continuing Education on the Urbana-Champaign campus. More than 100,000 people use it each year, including an increasing number of students.

"It's a fantastic place to study," says Richard Warner, a professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. As interim assistant dean for the university's office of extension and outreach, he points out that more academic programs are using the area. In addition to plant and wildlife biologists and ecologists, students studying energy, architecture and music are doing classwork and fieldwork there.

Over the September Labor Day weekend, Schejbal says, Allerton will host musicians from around the world for a music festival in one of the park's renovated barns.



*The Sun Singer, a bronze sculpted in 1929 by Carl Milles*

Beverly Scobell

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**"Citizen Views of State Government:  
New Survey Findings from Illinois"**

**Richard Schuldt, Director, UIS Survey Research Office**



**Alan Ehrenhalt**

**This program is intended for anyone interested in the expanding role of the states in the federal system and in citizens' knowledge and opinions about Illinois state government. Policymakers, government personnel, researchers, educators, students, the media, members of associations, and the general public will find this program of interest.**



## Software helps spot fraud quicker

Americans can thank a Southern Illinois University Carbondale professor for doing his part to make sure everyone pays their fair share of the tax bill. Jake Rose, associate professor in the School of Accountancy, designed software that detects fraud in financial and tax data by identifying irregularities in the distribution of digits in large sets of data.

"Individual numbers in invoices, purchase orders, financial statements and tax records have a predictable, expected pattern of digits," he says. The software can pinpoint "blips in the pattern" and narrow the scope of an investigation. For example, he says, suppose an accountant would see a lot of sales transactions starting with the digits 5 and 6, more than would be expected. Then investigators could look harder at what the transactions were for, who handled them and when they were done. "By looking at these unexpected patterns, you can greatly reduce the amount of investigative time."

The U.S. Treasury Department asked Rose to tailor his software to their needs. In addition, he provided training materials so that agents with little technology training could use the program. Treasury officials were so impressed with the software's effectiveness, they asked if they could share it with other federal agencies. Rose says it's being used by the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Homeland Security.

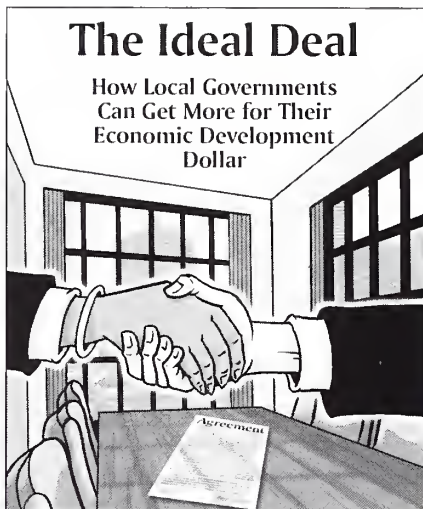
Whereas most techniques use small samples — say, 100 out of 1 million — his program, which is based on complex mathematical equations, allows agents to dump all 1 million bits of data into the software and point to places to look at more closely. Most people, he says, assume large sets of numbers are random and they can't get caught. "But it turns out these things aren't actually random."

He has anecdotal feedback from accounting firms that after investing months tracking down potential fraud, their employees were able to pinpoint problems after a couple of hours with his software.

"The good thing is the people who perpetrate the fraud don't understand the math, and you can catch them with it."

Beverley Scobell

## COMMUNITIES New handbook offers advice to local governments



Public officials now have a new tool to help them deal with companies that want such economic development incentives as tax abatements, low-interest loans and favorable land-use regulations. A free guide co-authored by Rachel Weber, a University of Illinois at Chicago associate professor of urban planning and policy, is designed to help local government negotiators get the best deal for taxpayers' money.

"Giving away tax revenues with few strings attached is not an effective way of meeting policy objectives or managing public finances," the authors write in *The Ideal Deal: How Local Governments Can Get More for Their Economic Development Dollar*. "Following the best practices

provided in this handbook is a first step toward designing legally enforceable contracts that can protect public interests and more widely distribute the benefits of economic development."

The average state provides more than 30 different kinds of economic development subsidies, many of which are administered by local or regional bodies. According to the report, total state and local spending for jobs is now estimated at more than \$50 billion a year. Illinois spent an estimated \$1.5 million to \$2 million in 2005, according to Good Jobs First-Illinois, a subsidy watchdog group. Critics claim — backed by studies that offer empirical evidence — that state and local incentives are often not cost-effective mechanisms for economic development because subsidized companies often renege on their promises of jobs and other public benefits.

"The evidence shows that incentives are less frequently deal-makers or deal-breakers," says Weber. Incentives don't matter relative to the fundamental things businesses care about when making their location decisions, like access to employees, access to their markets and good transportation networks, she says.

Illinois does do a good job in tracking the subsidies. The General Assembly passed legislation in 2003 to make yearly progress reports on all state subsidies available online. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity created a user-friendly Web site, according to Jeff McCourt, Illinois director of Good Jobs First. "Illinois went from one of the laxer states to one of the leading states in monitoring subsidies."

The handbook offers step-by-step advice on different elements of the process: assessment of public costs and benefits, performance standards, disclosure and oversight, and enforcement. Each topic includes examples that illustrate the key principles for negotiating ideal deals and serve as templates for actual contract language.

The authors offer Chicago's negotiations to bring the Ford plant to the South Side as an example of how to get an ideal deal. Weber says the city has been successful in requiring its subsidized developers "to jump through certain public interest hoops" to get them to design some aesthetic and environmental changes — green roofs, for example — and to insure jobs during and after construction.

"The city has taken advantage of its leverage with developers to require certain things in order for those developers to be recipients of the TIF [tax increment financing] largesse," she says.

The guide, which was co-authored by David Santacroce, a professor in the University of Michigan Clinical Law Program, is published by UIC's Center for Urban Economic Development and Good Jobs First, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit. It can be downloaded at [www.goodjobsfirst.org/pdf/idealdeal.pdf](http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/pdf/idealdeal.pdf).

Beverley Scobell



## JUNE DAIRY MONTH

An annual tradition for 70 years, June Dairy Month celebrates cooperation between farmers and other community members. It was initially funded by a one-cent-per-pound butterfat assessment each June to pay for promotion of dairy products. Today, dairy farmers pay 15 cents per hundred-weight, with 10 cents remaining local. The Midwest Dairy Association has taken over management of the Illinois State Fair Dairy Barn, home of the Butter Cow.

### ILLINOIS PRODUCTION

Dairy farms: 1,108

Dairy cows: 103,000

Average dairy herd size: 80 cows

Pounds of milk produced annually: 1.98 billion

Ranks 3rd in U.S. low-fat ice cream production

Ranks 12th in U.S. cheese production

Ranks 20th in U.S. milk production

It takes more than 21 pounds of whole milk to make one pound of butter.

The yellow color of butter comes mainly from the beta-carotene found in the grass cows eat.

More than 10 pounds of milk are used to make one pound of cheese.

It takes 12 pounds of whole milk to make one gallon of ice cream.



*The 2006 Butter Cow, exhibited in the Dairy Barn during the Illinois State Fair, took sculptor Sharon Bumaun of New York 58 hours and 600 pounds of butter to complete.*

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Public Health/Division of Food, Drugs and Dairies, 4-18-07

## Illinois Farm Bureau builds bridges between rural and urban people



Understanding the unique needs of all areas of Illinois makes our state legislators better lawmakers. IFB's Adopt a Legislator Program links urban legislators with rural farm families.

Farmer members of Illinois Farm Bureau visit the districts of urban legislators. Through on-farm visits our state lawmakers get a unique perspective of life in the country, and help build lifetime bonds.

For more information go to:

**[www.ilfb.org](http://www.ilfb.org)**



### IFB thanks those legislators who extended their hand of friendship through the Adopt a Legislator Program:

Suzanne Bassi, Maria Antonia (Toni) Berrios, Richard Bradley, James Brosnahan, Daniel Burke, Linda Chapa La Via, Annazette Collins, Marlow Colvin, Elizabeth Coulson, M. Maggie Crotty, John Cullerton, John D'Amico, Monique Davis, William Davis, William Delgado, Kenneth Dunkin, Jim Durkin, Sara Feigenholtz, Mary Flowers, John Fritchey, Paul Froehlich, Susan Garrett, Calvin Giles, Deborah Graham, Julie Hamos, Don Harmon, Rickey Hendon, Constance Howard, Randall Hultgren, Mattie Hunter, Wendell Jones, Kevin Joyce, Robin Kelly, Carolyn Krause, Louis Lang, Kimberly Lightford, Joseph Lyons, Edward Maloney, Iris Martinez, Karen May, Michael McAuliffe, Kevin McCarthy, Larry McKeon, Susana Mendoza, David Miller, Robert Molaro, Rosemary Mulligan, Antonio Munoz, Elaine Nekritz, Harry Osterman, Carole Pankau, Terry Parke, Sandra Pihos, Christine Radogno, Kwame Raoul, Robert Rita, Carol Ronen, Martin Sandoval, Angelo (Skip) Saviano, Jeffrey Schoenberg, Cynthia Soto, Donne Trotter, Arthur Turner, Louis Viverito, Eddie Washington, and Karen Yarbrough

INPR4008GS1106



by Joseph Ryan

# FREIGHT GRIDLOCK

The complications of  
a solution are as real as the  
consequences of inaction



Chicago is boastful of its role as home to the world's largest marathon road race, drawing the fastest runners from around the globe and 45,000 total competitors. But the Windy City could learn an important maxim from the speed machines who descend on its streets every fall: The fastest always wins the race.

Many Chicago Marathon runners literally outpace the city's freight rail shipping industry, one of the city's largest and most important. On average, freight trains move through Chicago's bottlenecks and choked junctions at a turtle-pace of 9 mph. The marathon's faster runners leave the diesel-chugging engines in their dust as they sprint at more than 12 mph. Even the slowest runners, sweating and sputtering at 4 mph, are running at half the pace of freight trains moving through the city.

In an economic, but very real sense, Chicago — the nation's rail hub and its most congested point — is losing the race. "The congestion in the Chicago area is a friction on the fluidity of the whole rail system," laments Paul Nowicki, government relations vice president for Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, which handled 2.5 million intermodal shipments in Chicago last year.

That runners in the famed marathon traverse the streets faster than high-powered freight trains is no laughing matter. More than \$22 billion in yearly economic activity and 37,000 jobs with a \$1.7 billion payroll are tied to the strangled industry. Many experts fear freight will eventually start routing around Chicago to save precious time and money. The largest railroad in Canada is already making moves to that end, opening a large distribution and switching center in Memphis, Tenn.

The solution to the problem, which became more apparent in recent years as international trade boomed, might be a \$1.5

## The Hudson Essay

Michael Hudson was vice president of public affairs at Illinois Tool Works Inc. and chairman of the *Illinois Issues* Advisory Board at the time of his death in 1992. In his memory, fellow board members established an annual essay to examine a significant economic trend in Illinois that has been affected by public policy or the lack of it. This essay about freight gridlock was funded by a donor who asked to remain anonymous. □

billion series of 70 rail improvement projects called CREATE, or the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program. Unfortunately for the industry, and perhaps for other citizens, no one seems to want to cover the tab as infighting continues over who should pay and whether the problem is as big as doomsday-sayers indicate.

In 2003, the state, all six of Chicago's major rail shippers, Amtrak and Metra, which oversees suburban commuter rails, agreed on CREATE's mission and project particulars. It marks the largest and most sweeping public-private partnership in rail history. The most

visible improvements will include the construction of six rail "flyovers," or overpasses for certain rail lines at backed-up junctions, in addition to 25 new overpasses or underpasses for major roads that cross heavily trafficked lines. Perhaps the most important upgrades, though, will create more direct paths for trains maneuvering Chicago's labyrinth of tracks. To do this, the six major freight operators, Metra and Amtrak have agreed to share the use of five designated rail corridors and invest heavily in signal improvements.

When complete, the average speed of freight trains through Chicago will rise to a more tolerable 15 mph.

To be sure, many experts agree that the complications in implementing the plan are as real as the consequences of inaction.

"We will have massive gridlock unless something is done," says Mike Franke, Amtrak's senior director of corridor planning. "And Chicago will continue to suffer in terms of its importance as a national rail center."

Currently, the Chicago region handles 1,200 trains a day, including 700 passenger trains, on a rail system that is more than a century old in key places. Tens of thousands of freight cars can take as long as two days to get through the

mess of bottlenecks and junctions when it can take the same time to get those goods halfway across the country. This significant strain threatens thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic stimulus. It also adds cost to products such as cars, paper, coal, corn and imported goods.

"It drives costs up, and it inevitably impacts customers as well," explains Nowicki. "Right now, freight is often delayed, and the delivery time for shipments is more uncertain."

Not just freight haulers feel the pinch, however. Chicago's expansive passenger service is hemmed in by the booming

Photograph courtesy of the Chicago CREATE Program



*The Archer Avenue crossing in Chicago is one of 25 proposed grade-separation projects in the CREATE Program. The partnership between the state, the city of Chicago, Metra and the nation's freight railroads aims to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and enhance public safety.*

freight industry and vice versa. During each weekday rush hour, freight traffic grinds to a halt to give hundreds of Metra passenger trains the right-of-way. On the flip side, Metra has limited expansion possibilities because freight trains use many of the same tracks and critical junctions.

The problems will only get worse. According to a 2004 report by the civic planning group Chicago Metropolis 2020, freight rail traffic will jump by a stunning 67 percent in the next 22 years. Metra and

Amtrak also are facing rising pressure to add routes and trains, particularly for reverse commuters and those traveling from small towns, as gas prices skyrocket and highways grind to a halt.

"We have had massive growth in freight traffic, about 3.5 percent a year, and it is continuing to grow," says Doug Hagestad, a former freight rail executive and associate director of Northwestern University's Transportation Center. "Plus, we want more passenger service. Where are you going to put these trains?"

Despite the glaring problems, action has been relatively slow as political will appears to be faltering. Since 2003, \$330 million of the needed \$1.5 billion has been secured, while the prospects of landing more money appear at least years away. Illinois lawmakers were able to rope in just \$100 million in the last federal transportation package. Negotiations on the next one won't start until 2009. At the same time, Gov. Rod Blagojevich has been reluctant to put forward a public works package. Proponents want it to include \$500 million over five years to get CREATE over the funding hump.

Part of the problem appears to be convincing lawmakers and average citizens that CREATE is worth the price tag.

Meanwhile, the six major rail



*This CREATE project in McCook, a suburban Cook County area southwest of Chicago, would extend the length of the existing rail connection between the BNSF Railway and the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad. It's slated for construction in 2007 and 2008.*

companies — BNSF, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific — have agreed to put forward just \$212 million of the total cost, with \$100 million already in the kitty. The rail companies say their cut equals the amount of economic benefit they expect to derive from CREATE. This formula leaves at least \$1.3 billion for the public to shoulder.

Amtrak, Metra and supportive business groups, such as the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, see this split as equitable, while others think the rail companies could bring more to the table. "There is a tremendous benefit here for the citizens and to the motorists who use Chicago freeways," says Robert Gallamore, former director of Northwestern University's Transportation Center and a retired railroad executive. As the argument goes, a more efficient freight system will allow the expansion of passenger service, reduce the number of trucks on the highways, remove wait times at railroad crossings and cut down on air pollution.

Yet, questions remain about how much impact a better freight rail system will have on the most visible related issue: interstate truck traffic. The Chicago Metropolis 2020 report concludes that any reduction in trucks will be "nominal." Gallamore says that assessment might be accurate overall, but he

argues there would be quick cuts in trucks between intermodal yards as over-the-road transfers are reduced. Specifically, he says, the truck-clogged route on Cicero Avenue near O'Hare International Airport would get much-needed relief.

Few, however, are arguing over the touted positive ramifications for passenger service and the overall economic benefit to the nation's third-largest city. "[For CREATE to fail] it would mean less business for the Chicago

intermodal yards. It would be less trucking and shipping business and restaurants and lodging and all the things that come with the shipping industry," says Brian Steele, Chicago Department of Transportation spokesman. Chicago has so far pledged \$30 million to CREATE.

Amtrak has been particularly excited about CREATE's potential to fix its woeful on-time performance and, therefore, fill more seats. Two flyover projects, one at a junction in Brighton Park and another on the southern Rock Island Line, would speed dozens of daily Amtrak trains heading south, west and east. At those two points, Amtrak trains are now forced to come to a complete stop and wait for freight trains to pass. Improving punctuality in Chicago helps keep the national Amtrak system on time as well.

"Freight train interference is the largest single source of Amtrak delays in the Midwest," says Amtrak's Franke. "Our growing ridership is vying for capacity over their growing freight volumes."

The question still remains for some on the sidelines whether the public is actually going to get \$1.3 billion in benefit and the freight companies just \$212 million. Jim LaBelle, deputy director of Chicago Metropolis 2020, says he thinks the rail companies could pay double what they have agreed to.



"If the state did come through, I would encourage the railroads to match that," LaBelle says of the \$500 million being sought from the state budget this year.

Freight haulers beg to differ. "That is simply not going to happen," says Nowicki. "We simply can't justify investing more private capital for public benefit."

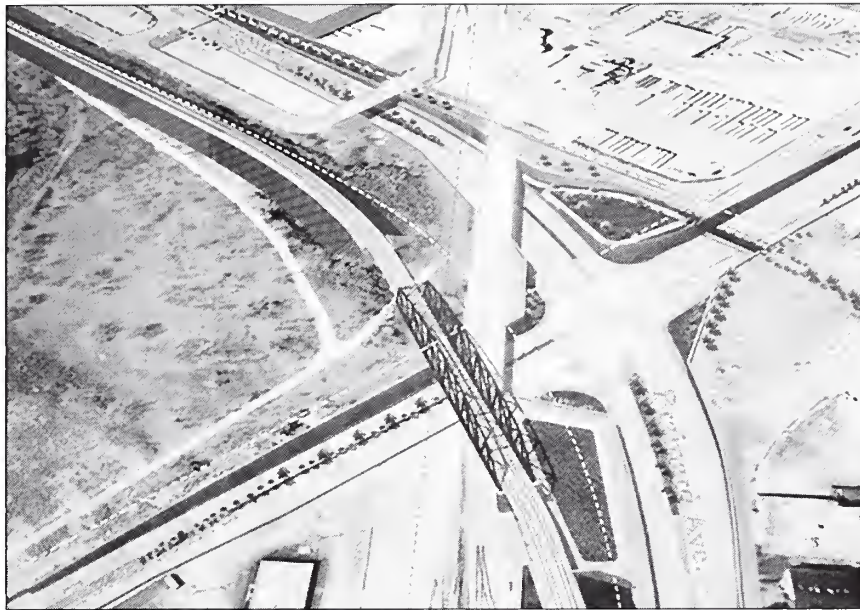
Indeed, the rail companies may have other options to plunking down big bucks on Chicago's century-old infrastructure.

"Logistic companies and shippers and purchasers are always looking for the quickest, most reliable routes," LaBelle says. "If it turns out for them that Chicago is a point of delay, enterprising logistics folks will get around that bottleneck."

Canadian National Railway, the northern nation's largest freight shipper, underscores LaBelle's point. After business began to boom in the late 1990s, CN started to feel the financial bleeding from Chicago's notorious delays, sending executives searching for a solution. In 2005, CN opened a delay-free, 2,500-square-acre intermodal shipment center in Memphis, Tenn. "A new transportation network is emerging and connecting the world in a different way," proclaims CN's promotional video on the new facility.

Today, CN can bypass Chicago with profitable loads from Asia and Europe destined for the southern and central United States. For example, CN now transfers large lumber shipments in Memphis instead of Chicago, potentially cutting delivery times from a sky-high 40 days to a manageable 28. In a business sense, CN appears to be on the right track, leaving Chicago on the wrong one.

Regardless of CN's move, others disagree that enough freight can bypass Chicago to put a relevant dent in the region's shipping economy. "It is like a



*This CREATE project is on Chicago's far Southeast Side. The roadway currently crosses the railroad tracks. The project would move the roadway underneath the railroad tracks to ease traffic congestion. Construction is expected to start later this year.*

scare tactic," says Gallamore, a former Union Pacific executive. "It is going to grow, but it is not going to suck away all the traffic. You are not going to see this sudden shift because the infrastructure simply isn't there."

Even Nowicki agrees that any possible major shifting of traffic around Chicago is years if not decades away. "Over the long term, cities like Memphis could take some of this business from Chicago," he says. "But in this business, it is not going to happen tomorrow."

Still, most agree that continued congestion will have an overall negative impact from the freeways to the stores. "Goods will cost more. It is that simple," says Hagestad, a former marketing vice president with the Illinois Central Railroad. "If it has to go on the highway system, that is what will happen unless we are going to force trucks to operate at a deficit."

Hagestad also argues that other Illinois towns are at risk, including Galesburg with its large intermodal facility in the western region of the state. If substantial traffic reroutes around Chicago, heading south to St. Louis or Memphis, the facility could lose significant business.

"Here is the rub," he says. "Suppose we don't do anything."

With so many interests at stake — freight and passenger rail, business, jobs, the cost of goods — why is action on

CREATE moving like a lumbering train through Chicago? "The challenge to get the program done is for groups of businesses and business leaders to say collectively, 'This is so important to the region's economy, and it may not help me this year, but in a few years it will help,'" LaBelle says.

Basically, the problem is the price tag and convincing people to pay it. While some key lawmakers see acute urgency in the issue, including

Chicago Democratic U.S. Rep. Daniel Lipinski, others have chosen to put other projects first, like former Republican U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert's pet Prairie Parkway in the far west suburbs.

Certainly the cost the public is being asked to foot without seeing a direct or immediate benefit creates a mountain of ambivalence for proponents to scale. "It is the immediate economic benefits that get people to invest hard dollars," notes Gallamore. At the same time, even LaBelle, who thinks the rail companies could pony up more, acknowledges a substantial chunk will have to come from the public. "It is a shared benefit between the public and private," he says. "Without the public investment, CREATE is not going to get done."

Meanwhile, the massive and experimental project jerks forward. With \$330 million nailed down, the planning for most of the 70 projects is under way, and construction on nearly a dozen smaller improvements is set to start this summer. "It is moving and that is the important thing," notes Tom White, spokesman for the Association of American Railroads. Even so, the pace — like the trains through Chicago — will be tested against the patience of the business world. □

*Joseph Ryan is the transportation reporter for the Daily Herald in Arlington Heights.*

# Risk management

Should the public or the private sector  
assume the responsibility of supplying power to Illinoisans?

by Bethany Carson

*Photograph courtesy of Joe Miller of the Dakota Electric Association*

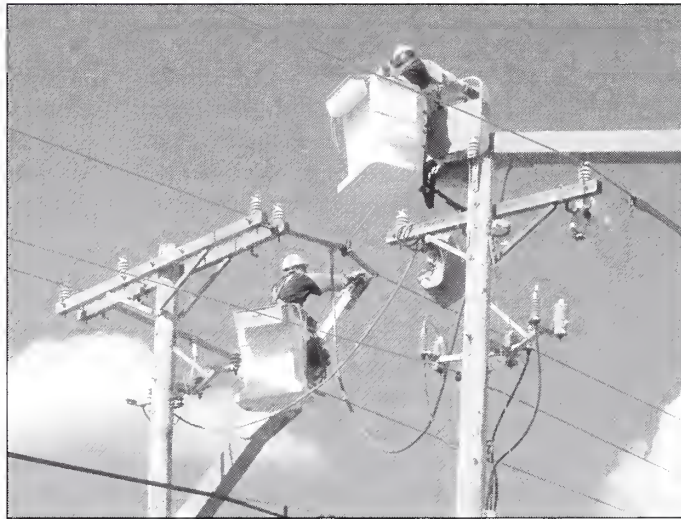
For more than seven months, Illinois lawmakers have been feeling political heat from consumers over rising electricity bills. Some even faced death threats. In their defense, lawmakers pounded their fists, raised their voices and resorted to sulking in frustration as their legislative leaders traded procedural jabs. House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Emil Jones Jr. have each proposed measures that call for the state to intervene in setting electric rates.

Yet nothing has changed, and such political gamesmanship is tainting confidence in the state's ability to ensure consumers get access to an essential utility at an affordable rate.

As the debate intensified this spring, Madigan announced a late-in-the-game proposal that would open the door for the state to become the sole power provider. He proposes creating a new Illinois Power Authority, a five-member nonprofit agency that would either buy power or generate its own power to resell to all types of customers.

"Power can be supplied by governments at a lower cost than by private investor companies," Madigan asserted during an April House committee meeting.

He's right, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration. Investor-owned utilities supply power to residents at a



10 percent higher rate than publicly owned utilities. Private utilities' commercial rates are 9 percent higher.

Illinois' 2007 electricity rates, however, increased much more than that, between 26 percent and 55 percent on average, after they had been frozen for a decade as part of a 1997 state law. In a deal with utilities, lawmakers back then agreed to decrease and freeze rates, promising that the price-setting process would transition from a state-regulated to a deregulated system once the law expired.

Now that the law is off the books, the state's two main investor-owned utilities are buying power at market rates. Those costs are passed along. In turn, most Illinois customers are suddenly paying more than the artificially low rates they paid under the freeze.

Lawmakers, lobbyists and consumer

advocates have known for years this would happen, but they didn't know the state's regulatory Illinois Commerce Commission would restructure the way utilities buy and distribute power through an auction. As a result of the September 2006 auction, utilities bought power in bulk at a fixed price. Business and residential customers who use all-electric heat are paying the greatest increases, anecdotally as high as 300 percent.

The uproar about those skyrocketing electricity bills led Madigan to ask whether there's a better way. Not just to alleviate the pressure of the 2007 rate hikes, but to ensure that all types of residents and businesses are protected as energy demand steadily climbs along with prices. More expensive natural gas and stricter federal air pollution regulations also could spur additional changes in the electricity industry and heighten the importance of diversifying sources of power.

If lawmakers believe Madigan's public power idea would provide the best long-term solution, Illinois would become one of the few states with the authority — and the associated risks — to buy power or generate its own power, serving all types of customers that could include the investor-owned utilities at the center of this spring's electricity rate debate.

Currently, 95 percent of Illinois customers are served by either Common-



wealth Edison, an Exelon subsidiary that serves northern Illinois customers, or Ameren Illinois, an Ameren Corp. subsidiary that serves most downstate customers. The private, for-profit companies are owned by investors. They buy electricity on the wholesale market and resell it to residents, businesses and municipalities.

There are other suppliers in Illinois. More than two dozen smaller private cooperatives are owned by their members. Most own their wires and distribute power to rural areas, while two generate power for cooperatives in their regions, according to John Freitag, vice president of operations for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives trade association based in Springfield.

Ron Earl, chief executive officer of the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency, testified to the House committee in April that the cooperative wasn't required to participate in the 1997 rate freeze. It didn't have to buy wholesale electricity in the Illinois Commerce Commission's 2006 auction either. "Our current wholesale costs are about 20 percent below the cost resulting from the auction," he said.

While electric cooperative customers aren't currently affected by the 2007 rate increases, that could change, according to Freitag. "Directly, right now, there's absolutely no effect on any of the cooperatives in Illinois because they operate differently. For those cooperatives that are receiving power from Ameren or might in the future, when their contract runs out, they're going to have to go out onto the open market to purchase a new source of power."

Another power auction is scheduled for January, and such consumer advocates as Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat



*Some electric cooperatives buy wholesale power from Ameren. Others pool resources to form generation transmission cooperatives. This co-op power plant, owned by Southern Illinois Power Cooperative in Marion, uses Illinois coal.*

Quinn, the Citizens Utility Board and state Attorney General Lisa Madigan argue the process violates the intent of the 1997 state law because it's unfair and controlled by corporate interests.

"Right now, with this reverse auction concocted by the utilities, we're put in a severe disadvantage," Quinn says. "The whole idea of the Illinois Power Authority is to even up the odds. [It's] designed to step in and say to the Commerce Commission, 'If you're not going to protect consumers in the procurement of power, consumers are

going to have to protect themselves and need the power authority to do that.'"

Lisa Madigan went as far as filing a complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to allege that 15 power companies manipulated the power auction and cost consumers more than \$4 billion. The complaint cites evidence, for instance, that ComEd's parent company, Exelon Generation, won 97 percent of the 41-month ComEd contracts.

The commission stands by the auction, one of 12 options the panel consid-

ered in carrying out state law. "The only viable method was the auction," says Chairman Charles Box. "You have to go on what's in the record. There was no other viable alternative put forth by the attorney general or [the Citizens Utility Board] during the proceeding."

The commission, however, has launched an investigation into the way in which Ameren and ComEd spread the burden of increased rates on different classes of customers, mainly the residents and businesses that use electric heating. The investigation is aimed at determining

whether the utilities should have adjusted some rates for different types of customers, says Beth Bosch, commission spokeswoman.

Speaker Madigan, who once served as an administrative law judge for the commission, also criticizes the agency as ineffective and weak. In fact, his measure removes the panel from overseeing the proposed power authority.

"It's an acknowledgment the ICC has been a complete failure in terms of the competition and in terms of what was to have happened over the last

Photograph courtesy of Exelon Nuclear



*Byron Generating Station in northern Illinois' Ogle County is about 90 miles west of Chicago. It's a two-unit nuclear power facility capable of generating about 1,200 net megawatts per unit, enough to supply more than 2 million American homes.*



decade,” says his spokesman, Steve Brown. “And it’s an acknowledgment that the utilities have failed to do what they promised.”

The legislation says: “There is a lack of confidence that the electricity needs of residents, commerce and industry can be supplied in a reliable, efficient and economical manner in Illinois because ComEd and AmerenIP, Ameren-CIPS and AmerenCILCO have increased their rates unreasonably and unnecessarily, repeatedly threatened bankruptcy, failed to maintain their transmission and distribution systems in a manner that ensures reliability and in some cases failed to restore power to customers for more than a week after an outage.”

Madigan’s alternative simply takes what’s being done on a local basis in Illinois and expands it to a statewide market, Brown says.

Consumers in 42 Illinois municipalities are shielded from the 2007 rate increases because their local governments own and operate electric systems — the wires, the utility poles, the transformers and the meters. About 30 of the municipally owned utilities buy power from the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency and distribute it to their residents. And they set their own rates.

Springfield’s electric customers have protection for now, too. The City Water, Light and Power utility generates its own electricity and provides customers with cheaper, local power.

This spring, the city also started building a \$450 million coal power plant producing 200 megawatts of electricity, enough to supply about 80,000 homes at any given time. The new plant is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 32 percent from current levels in 2010, and sulfur dioxide emissions by about 94 percent, says spokesman Ray Scrati. The city also agreed to purchase 120 megawatts of wind power.

Madigan cites Springfield as an example of one way the state could help control

electricity prices.

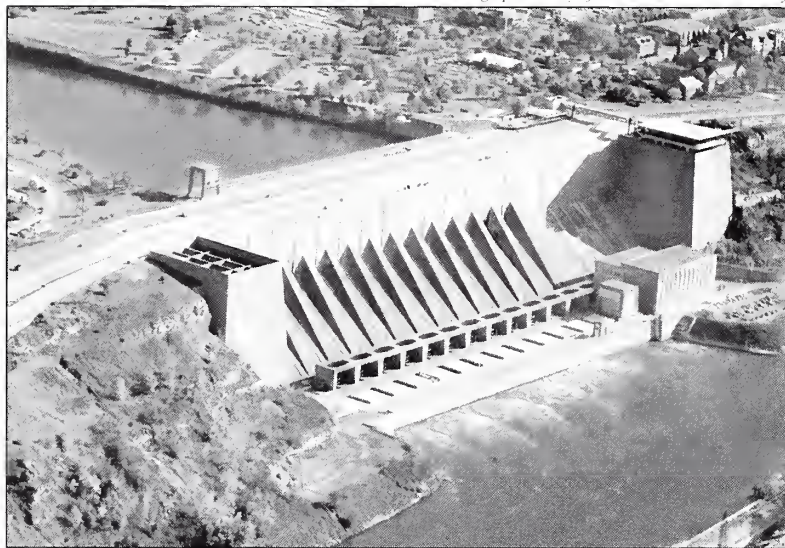
“If the city of Springfield can provide good, reliable power at a lower cost than a private investor company, then we ought to at least consider the creation of the Illinois Power Authority,” he said to the committee in April.

Fifteen other states already have state-owned public power systems, but most are more established and already own their power plants and transmission lines. The Tennessee Valley Authority has been around since the Great Depression. So has the New York Power Authority, the nation’s largest state-owned electric utility — and the model for Madigan’s idea.

But New York has at least one major difference: Niagara Falls. The dam generates 2.4 million kilowatts of hydroelectric power. That is combined with power from seven other hydroelectric facilities to generate 75 percent of what the public authority generates; 19 percent of the state’s electricity is generated through renewable power.

By state and federal law, the power authority distributes that power to 51 electric systems and rural cooperatives, industries, investor-owned utilities, public schools, hospitals, streetlights, subways and other governmental entities, says spokesman Michael Saltzman. He adds that public facilities save about \$100 million a year through energy efficiency initiatives and such other services as solar power.

The authority’s projects tended to



*The Niagara Power Project, located about 4.5 miles downstream from Niagara Falls, uses hydropower to generate most of New York state's electricity supply, which is overseen by the public New York Power Authority. Illinois' proposed power authority is modeled after New York's.*

respond to urgent public needs. For instance, one reason the Niagara Power Project was created was because a private utility collapsed into the river, and the authority stepped in to help energy-intensive industries keep their cheap source of power, Saltzman says.

Madigan’s proposal mirrors the New York Power Authority’s oversight by creating a board of trustees appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate. The authority finances projects by floating bonds and using revenue from electricity

sales, just as Madigan proposes, with the exception that the Illinois panel couldn’t hold more than \$4 billion in debt. Illinois’ board members would serve five-year terms, and they would have to be attorneys, accountants and engineers with at least 10 years of experience. Two would have to have a decade of experience in economics, finance or environmentally related fields.

Republican Rep. Bill Black of Danville questions why the authority wouldn’t be subject to oversight by the Illinois Commerce Commission.

“It may be that that is a warning shot to the Commerce Commission: If you don’t get more involved in this process, I think I can come up with something that may in fact replace you in the near future,” Black says. “The speaker is generally a chapter ahead of anybody down here.”

But Black adds he doesn’t understand Madigan’s motivations and that he opposes the idea of the state building new power plants or taking over existing plants as “absolutely prohibitive.”

Rep. George Scully, a Flossmoor Democrat, is more optimistic. “I start from the basic premise that government should step in when the private sector is unwilling or unable to deliver service. At the present time, I believe that the public sector has failed in this arena. Therefore, we should definitely consider government stepping in to provide that service that the private sector cannot or will not provide properly.”

One group supporting the idea is the Illinois Coal Association. Not only would



the Illinois Power Authority be required by law to build its first facility as a coal-fired power plant, but all of the authority's coal plants would have to use only Illinois coal.

The language about setting rates, however, is much more vague, something that irks Ameren and ComEd officials who testified to the House committee in April. While both utility executives said they could work with the state if a public power system were approved, they weren't so keen on the language in the measure that would allow the state, essentially, to compete with them to supply retail power.

"The threshold question is, who is doing what?" said Craig Nelson, vice president of Ameren Illinois companies. "The creation of the authority does not relieve us of our obligation to locate and acquire power supply for our customers."

He added that the expected savings wouldn't appear for years, maybe even a decade because it takes that long to plan and build a new coal-fired power plant.

Tom Overbye, an engineering professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, teaches a course in analyzing the power system and restructuring the

electricity industry. He says he also doesn't know whether the public power authority would be able to secure lower prices for the average customer. But he could see the state being able to secure a better deal for the all-electric customers. "I think that they could get a lower price for the electric heating customers because most of their electricity is [used] at night, and at night, the price of electricity is lowest."

In the current rate-setting process, Overbye says, the auction charges a fixed rate regardless of whether consumers use their power at night or during the daylight hours of peak demand.

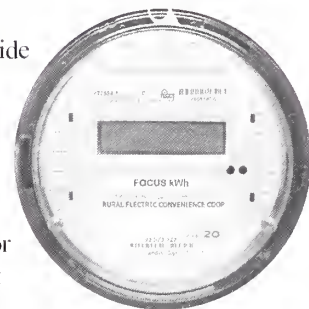
He's immune from the 2007 rate increases because he gets his electricity from the Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, a nonprofit, member-owned utility based in Paxton that serves 13,000 meters in a 10-county area. It gets its electricity from Jacksonville-based Soyland Power Cooperative, which provides wholesale electricity to 11 distribution cooperatives in central Illinois. But he says all customers can expect to eventually see an increase in their bills.

"The fact that the base price of

electricity has gone up, we're not going to be able to do much about that," Overbye says. "But I think we need to be more creative in meeting the needs of special customers, like the electric heating customers."

It all depends on whether lawmakers decide that the public, rather than the private sector, should assume the risk for electric crises or bad investment decisions.

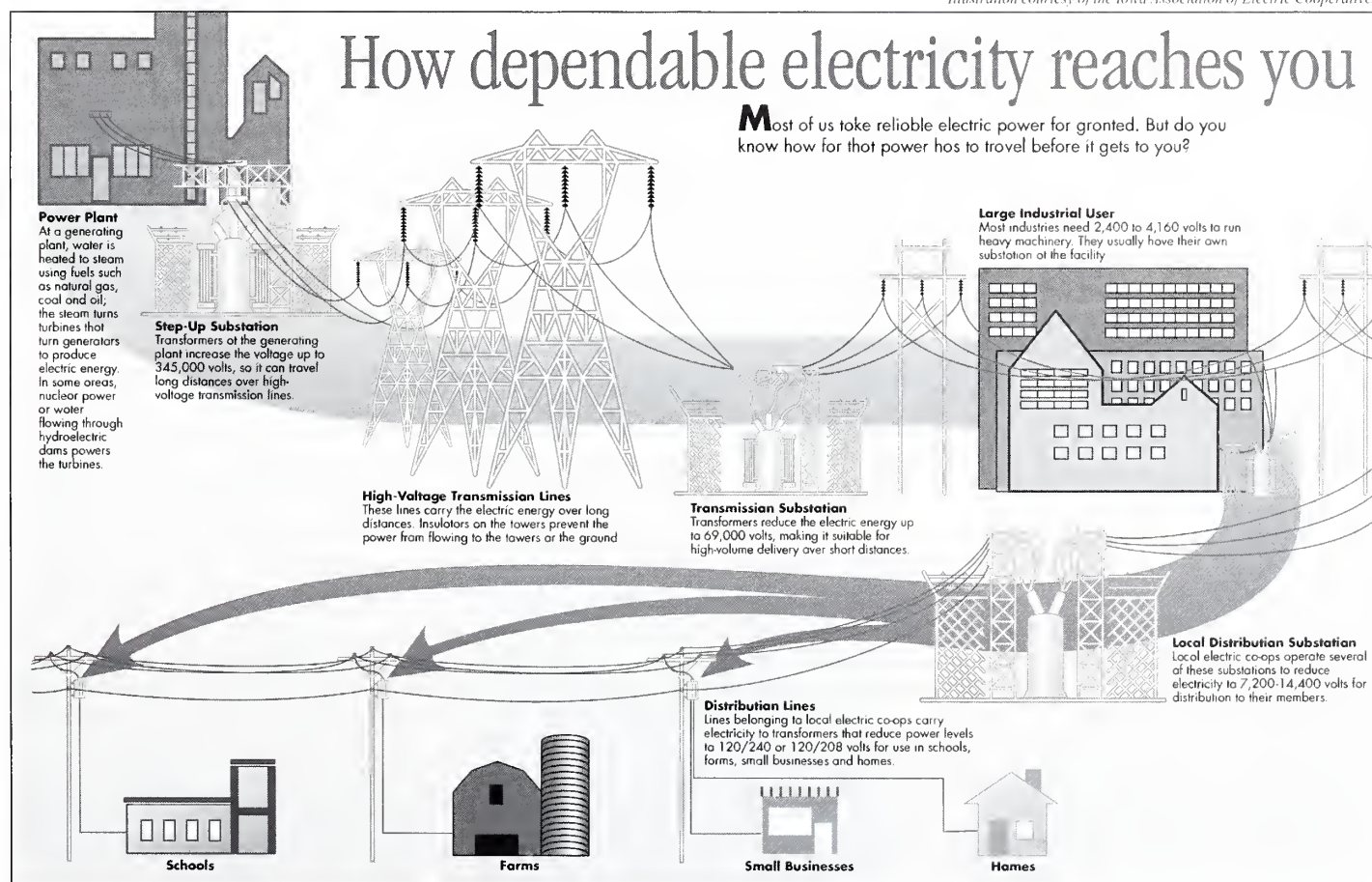
If investor-owned utilities invest in a power source that later skyrockets in price, for instance, shareholders foot the bill with some cost trickling down to customers, Overbye says. But if the state sinks a lot of money into, say, coal-fired power plants and then the federal government tightens restrictions, coal prices could drastically inflate. Taxpayers could get left holding the bill. □



*Illustration courtesy of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives*

## How dependable electricity reaches you

Most of us take reliable electric power for granted. But do you know how far that power has to travel before it gets to you?



# Financial trap

As more scam artists take advantage of unsuspecting borrowers, mortgage foreclosures are increasing at record rates

by Deanese Williams-Harris

State Rep. Esther Golar gets upset every time she sees an abandoned building in her district. She recalls a walk she took down the 6100 block of South Carpenter in Englewood, where she counted nine single-family homes and two-flats that had been hit by foreclosure.

"Mortgage fraud has really picked up a notch," the Chicago Democrat says, adding that even street gangs have joined the list of shady individuals who prey upon minority and low- to moderate-income homeowners.

In that neighborhood, as in others across the country, families are losing their only source of net wealth, equity in their homes, through predatory practices in a little-regulated sector of the lending industry.

Nationwide, foreclosure rates on predatory and deceptive loans have skyrocketed, according to RealtyTrac Inc., a California-based business that tracks foreclosures. According to the company's April report, March foreclosures rose 47 percent over the previous year. That's one foreclosure filing for every 775 households in the nation. In Illinois, the rate of foreclosures rose more than 70 percent since March 2006. In Chicago alone, one out of every 163 households will end up in foreclosure.

Some, like Golar, are calling for immediate action. Kevin Whelan, communications director for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, called ACORN, says most of the 2 million foreclosures

nationwide, actual and predicted, within the last year resulted from three types of loans: so-called subprime loans that often are made to consumers who have poor credit records, predatory loans that hide the true costs and fraudulent loans that trap borrowers into signing fabricated contracts.

Subprime loans aren't illegal, but many

## By the numbers

- About 80 percent of mortgage fraud cases involve inflated property appraisals or nonexistent properties.
- Fraud plays a role in 20 percent of loans that enter foreclosure.
- Subprime loans account for 10 percent to 15 percent of the lending market, but they are at the root of 60 percent of foreclosures.
- The number of Federal Bureau of Investigation inquiries into mortgage fraud increased by 400 percent from 2003 to 2006.

## Scam artists' favorite tactics

- Falsify identity documents
- Misrepresent employment and income
- Record false down payments
- Use multiple contracts for a single home repair loan

SOURCE: The Mortgage Bankers Association Regulatory Compliance Conference Report of September 2006

homeowners could have qualified for better deals, Whelan says. "Some will argue that the subprime industry is bad for business. However, some subprime loans are necessary, as long as there are fair terms for people to pay back loans."

Nationally, brokers who offer subprime loans tend to target certain communities, according to recent research. The Center for Responsible Lending, a nonprofit North Carolina-based research and policy organization, reports that African-American and Latino borrowers are more likely to receive subprime loans. In 2005, more than 53 percent of African Americans signed up for subprime loans when they bought, improved or refinanced their homes. More than 37 percent of Latinos received subprime loans. The rate for Caucasians was 21 percent.

The center's report, *Losing Ground*, concludes that more than 2 million households in the subprime market either lost their homes to foreclosure or hold subprime mortgages that will fail over the next several years. The study estimates a resulting loss of \$164 billion in home equity.

Homeowners trapped in bad loans often use the subprime market to refinance. Yet predatory and deceptive lending practices in that market can yield more serious problems. For instance, homeowners might count on a flat interest rate for a year without realizing the rate will fluctuate after that. Or at closing, Whelan says, the broker might tell the client the rate has gone up and



that they can refinance later, though that might not be true.

Munai Newash, on the staff of ACORN Housing Corp. in Chicago, says at least 50 percent of the calls the group receives pertain to broker dishonesty. The national nonprofit organization offers services to first-time homeowners, those considering refinancing and those facing foreclosure. Homeowners with excessive bills, she says, may be blindsided by the promise of a lump sum of cash and lower monthly payments.

"[The brokers] tell the client they're entering a fixed mortgage, when in fact, it's only fixed for three to five years," Newash says. "Then they realize they have an adjustable rate when it's too late and the balloon payment is due."

Some dishonest brokers feed on the borrower's lack of knowledge. "The brokers think, 'This is what they'll hear, and this is how we'll say it,'" Newash says.

Brokers aren't as heavily regulated as other industries, offering some leeway for the unethical to trick consumers into bad loans. As it stands, brokers also have the right to charge high fees.

"The lenders do not act in the borrower's best interest," Whelan says. "It's like being on a used car lot where the salesman is trying to get you to pay the most money for a bad car. The lending business should be structured more like real estate, where the broker is acting in the best interest of the consumer."

In cases of mortgage fraud, brokers fabricate or leave out information on the loan application after the borrower has signed.

Newash says mortgage fraud is a big problem in Illinois. "Some call it fraud. I call it deception."

Particularly, she has seen the prevalence of fraud with stated-income loans, when borrowers don't show proof of income, such as federal tax returns, bank statements or paycheck stubs. Sometimes the broker changes the income level to a higher number so banks will believe the consumers can pay the loan amount back.

"I've had borrowers tell me, 'I never

said I made that much,'" Newash says.

However, once the borrower signs the loan contract, the blame falls on him or her. Legally, borrowers can opt out of loans at closing. However, Whelan says families feel pressured to sign because they have to pay off other bills.

Furthermore, some ACORN clients claim brokers have picked up and moved by the time clients have figured out the scam. Newash calls this a "fly-by-night" move. At the end of the day, the borrower and the lender are responsible, and the broker walks away.

Whelan also charges legislators with acting too slowly to stop high foreclosure rates. The issue has been addressed in some states, but he says lawmakers shouldn't have waited for a public crisis.

A federal law, amended in 2003, limits the ability of lenders to foreclose on active duty military personnel. Under the law, interest rates are capped at 6 percent for military families that face a loss of income because of active duty.

Some progress was made nationwide

***Brokers aren't as heavily regulated as other industries, offering some leeway for the unethical to trick consumers into bad loans. As it stands, brokers also have the right to charge high fees.***

In March, the Illinois attorney general's office reported that the Cook County Circuit Court identified a jump in foreclosure filings of more than 50 percent in the first two months of 2007.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan made mortgage fraud a priority in the inaugural speech beginning her second term this

year. A few months later, she announced a plan to slow escalating foreclosures in this state, and she helped draft legislation that would enhance protections for consumers facing foreclosure. The measure, introduced by Rep. Daniel Burke, a Chicago Democrat, would prohibit prepayment penalties and excessive refinancing. It also would limit high-cost loans. Madigan plans to convene two statewide summits to explore further financial and legal assistance for those affected by mortgage fraud.

Last year, legislators attempted to slow down predatory lending.

However, responding to public pressure, Gov. Rod Blagojevich suspended the Illinois Predatory Lending Database Pilot Program in January. The legislation, sponsored by House Speaker Michael Madigan, assigned the program to certain areas in Cook County. It was designed to ensure borrowers were educated about the loan process before signing contracts.

"Even though this law was designed to fight predatory loans," Blagojevich said in a printed statement justifying

*Photograph courtesy of the Illinois attorney general's office*



***Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan made mortgage fraud a priority during her second inaugural speech in January.***

this spring. The Associated Press reported last month that some mortgage lenders have decided to work with distressed homeowners to prevent high rates of foreclosure. As suggested by U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, a Connecticut Democrat, some lenders agreed to reduce finance rates, change the terms of high-risk loans and offer refinancing at a lower cost.

Still, the problem is significant in Illinois, especially in the Chicago area.

cutting the program short, "it is clear that the program may be negatively affecting the communities it is designed to protect. I am stopping the program until we can find a system that effectively fights predatory lending and protects homebuyers."

The governor relied on a report published by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that says home sales dropped nearly 50 percent in the designated Chicago areas.

Golar isn't happy the project ended in her legislative district. "It was the best bill we had to fight mortgage fraud in the state," she says. "People were adamantly against it, claiming we were redlining and that the bill was prejudiced in nature because it was designated to 10 areas."

The pilot program required brokers to enter borrowers' information in a state database within 10 days of their applications. Originally, the borrowers' credit scores would help determine whether they would be required to receive counseling before committing to a loan.

The governor has since proposed new rules that focus on the lenders, taking the borrowers' credit scores out of the equation. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation is responsible for drawing up those rules. Upon approval, they would apply to all of Cook County. Opposing groups have until late June to forward comments to the department or to request a public hearing on the matter.

Meanwhile, brokers do face some state regulations. Loan originators must take comprehensive tests to measure their knowledge of the loan industry and agree to criminal and credit background checks.

Golar also has reintroduced a measure this spring that would extend the statute of limitations from three to seven years for consumers wanting to file grievances against brokers and lenders accused of fraud. Last year, the House unanimously approved the measure. Golar, being new to the lawmaking process, didn't ask anyone to pick up the measure in the

Senate, so it stalled. This year, she's working with another Chicago Democrat, Sen. Mattie Hunter, to win approval in both chambers.

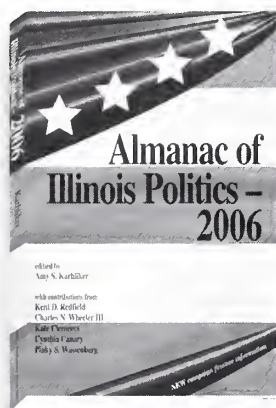
Advocacy groups also have stepped in to help consumers. ACORN has started a public campaign to help prevent foreclosures. Whelan says people want to focus on Wall Street and the banks losing money, when the real fallout is in communities, families and neighborhoods.

"Families are facing not having a home and losing equity in their home," he says. "This is why we see abandoned and boarded up housing in some communities."

Golar says the biggest problem that feeds fraud in the state is that people just don't check things out. "[Consumers] get all this money up front, and the end result is the bank doesn't get all of their money, and you lose your property," she says. "The devastation can be seen in communities throughout the city. The buildings are just there." □

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# A MATTER OF CHARACTER

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*When politicians use their office and its power to advantage someone, they seldom ask who is being disadvantaged*

by Paul Craig

Patronage has the potential to be a social good or a social bad in every sector of society where powerful people make decisions about jobs. Often there is a quid pro quo working when hiring decisions are being made, and this may be troubling from an ethical perspective. Patronage, when it is bad, is an expression of character defects in the leaders and administrators who make these decisions. No such accusation is justified when leaders select their policy teams and appoint advisers and staff who will serve at their pleasure. It may be a stretch to call such decisions patronage, but if they are referred to in this way, it seems clear that this is a good rather than a bad.

The arguments against patronage are centered in moral principle and conscience, but these it would seem are powerless in the face of expediency, the thirst for power and greed. These easily trump what is right, moral and fair.

When politicians use their office and its power to advantage someone, they seldom ask who is being disadvantaged. They intuitively and instinctively know someone is, but by not inquiring and by not concerning themselves with the consequences of their decisions, they feel protected by a shroud of denial and ignorance.

For many political and appointed leaders today, greatness is an abstraction, not a reality they aspire to. The qualities that bestow greatness are those that are associated with character — qualities such as goodness, honesty, integrity,

morality, fairness and magnanimity. These are the building blocks of character, and no one in all of history achieved greatness without having most of them.

Leaders today who engage in improper or unlawful patronage acts do not do so out of confusion over right and wrong. They know when they are doing something that is wrong. The malady these leaders suffer from is not confusion but infidelity. They are not confused about right or wrong; they are simply not being true to the principles of moral and ethical behavior that they know and understand well.

I am not qualified to speak to the illegality of patronage, but I do feel qualified to speak to the ethical implications of passing out jobs on the basis of relationships rather than competence or fairness.

In the marvelous remake of the classic movie *Sabrina*, Linus Larrabee (played by Harrison Ford) is providing his mother (played by Nancy Marchand) with some facts of life about the methods their corporation uses to grow its wealth. He says to her, “Did you think it’s pretty? You have never been around to see the faces of the people after we have bought the company they worked for and are now losing their jobs.” Ignorant of this reality, Linus’ mother could enjoy the wealth and privilege it provides.

Ignorant of or indifferent to the consequences of their decisions, decision makers can play the patronage game and never be required to look into

the faces of the people they harm. It is important to remember that it is distance and separation that insulate the politician and the bureaucrat from the consequences of their patronage decisions.

Charles Frankel, one of our home-grown philosophers, reminded Americans that a decision is responsible only when the decision maker must answer to those affected by it. And this is why most patronage decisions are irresponsible. There is no real accountability for these actions, and the kind that can be imposed by statute is unlikely to discourage the practice. Separation and distance are a reality in Illinois patronage, and this also encourages irresponsible behavior. The philosophers also remind us that power must be balanced with responsibility, and to exercise power without responsibility is an operational definition of a god.

The argument against harmful patronage can be further illuminated by focusing our gaze on a single life. In Illinois state government, one can find dozens of individuals who exemplify the consequences of powerful people making decisions that negatively affect their lives, and those who make patronage decisions nearly always act with no knowledge or concern for the people they harm. In every agency under the governor, one can find many examples of loyal, dedicated, competent and hardworking people who have had their careers and lives disrupted and their morale shattered by patronage decisions.

An example would be a man or woman in a state job with 15 to 20 years of service. Many of these people have been following a career development plan that, over time, increases both their value to the agencies they work for and their prospects for promotion. Now consider the impact on employees who see right before their eyes an opportunity evaporate. Perhaps one of these employees had worked in the same unit or bureau for 10 or 15 years and had come to be regarded as the informal leader and heir apparent to the job one notch above in the hierarchy.

Now consider this scenario. You are one of these employees and your boss, who occupies the position you have been preparing for, announces his or her retirement. You have worked hard to position yourself for fair consideration to succeed your boss and be promoted. On a Monday morning, you come to work and are notified that someone has been named to the vacant position. You do not know the person placed in this job as she did not come from your agency, and the “grapevine” informs you that she has no prior state government experience. Over time, you conclude that the person cannot do the job, and her behavior suggests she also knows she cannot do the job.

These appointees take on the behavior of “cave dwellers,” using their offices as their caves, often going through most days with their doors closed. The gusto with which they thrust themselves into political conversations with cronies who also have come to your agency by some mysterious process is interesting, if not amusing. Such people often engage in planning weekend or annual golf outings, and they become involved in the NCAA, World Series or other such pools. They avoid attending meetings where they may be asked questions they cannot answer. Some are brazen and assert publicly that they were not “sent here to do the agency’s work but only as a temporary place to wait for the next campaign assignment.”

Dozens of Illinois state government employees have experiences like this each year. They feel the frustration and endure the psychological impact of a patronage system when it gets out of control.

Illinois needs to find a way to connect the power of decision makers to accountability for the second- and third-order effects of their decisions. And Illinois needs to take a more enlightened view of how human and organizational performance should be audited. There is no systematic effort in Illinois state government to audit the performance

capability and capacity of departments, boards and commissions. This oversight should be corrected, and performance audits would reveal problems that need to be solved and opportunities for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

In every organization, there is a very high reliance on “discretionary effort” — this is what a good employee gives without being asked to. When people become de-motivated and overwhelmed with feelings of unfair and inequitable treatment, they simply withhold “discretionary effort.” This drags down organizational performance and creates the need for more people, and again the patronage system responds and the problem worsens.

It may be that state officials would get more out of improving the selection and quality of people placed in state jobs than they would by all of our attempts to reinvent government.

It’s worth a try. □

*Paul Craig of Springfield is Senior Fellow and director of the University of Illinois’ Institute of Government and Public Affairs’ Office of Public Leadership. He previously held executive positions with the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Teachers’ Retirement System.*

## Hiring and firing, Illinois style

Last month, the Civil Service Commission refused to accept the recommendation of Anthony Dos Santos, an administrative law judge, that fired employees Dawn DeFrates and Michael Casey receive 14-day suspensions because the case against them was too weak. The five-member panel ordered that new evidence be taken. The governor’s office planned to argue the firings were justified.

Following a year-long investigation into hiring practices at Central Management Services, Gov. Rod Blagojevich fired DeFrates and Casey, former personnel officers at the agency, for allegedly mishandling applications and giving preferential treatment to some applicants. The administration claimed the special treatment included giving applicants with political connections an undeserved “A” grade and pressuring subordinates to change grades to get them through the system faster.

However, Judge Dos Santos found no evidence to support that. “At no point in this proceeding did anyone testify that they were pressured to change a grade,” the judge wrote in a decision, as reported by The Associated Press. “In fact, the

testimony is directly contrary to that assertion. Each and every grader testified that they graded the applications the same.”

The Blagojevich Administration’s hiring practices have been under federal investigation for more than a year.

But he isn’t the only public official in Illinois to receive scrutiny for mixing jobs with politics.

Former Gov. George Ryan remains free on appeal of his conviction on federal corruption charges, including his administration’s use of state employees for political work on state time. He was sentenced to six and a half years in prison. More than 60 people were convicted in that Operation Safe Road investigation.

Robert Sorich, former top aide to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, received nearly four years in prison for rigging city hiring from his position in the Mayor’s Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, known informally as the patronage office. He is one of 41 people convicted in a larger investigation of Chicago City Hall.

*The Editors*



# ARRINGTON'S ARMY

*Strategies in leadership  
come in many shapes and taxes*

by Christopher Wills

Gov. Rod Blagojevich loves to dredge up obscure quotes and draw lessons from history. This is the man who once compared the State Board of Education to the Duchy of Brandenburg and the debate over gambling to the travails of Odysseus. Senate President Emil Jones Jr. has his deep moments, too — turning to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* for political guidance.

But surely both men have their minds a little closer to home this spring as they try to pass the biggest tax increase in Illinois history. They must, at least occasionally, be thinking about Springfield in 1969, when another governor and another Senate president led the fight to create the state income tax and ended up paying a huge political price.

If Blagojevich and Jones need a refresher, they can pick up Taylor Pensoneau's new biography of W. Russell Arrington, the Senate Republican leader who ended up sponsoring legislation to create the income tax he had spent years opposing.

*Powerhouse: Arrington from Illinois* covers much more than the tax battle. It also lays out Arrington's amazing role in creating the government structure we know in Illinois today. ("Senator Arrington is the father of the modern General Assembly," says House Speaker Michael Madigan, someone who should know.) But the climax of the book is the struggle over taxes, an episode that parallels today's

events closely enough that Blagojevich and Jones must be sweating, but differs enough to give them hope that they'll still have their jobs when it's all over.

Arrington came from a working-class family that wandered during his childhood from Carlinville to Alton to East St. Louis. But he avoided the coal mines and packinghouses and managed to attend college,

get a law degree and set up a new life in the Chicago suburbs. At the height of his power, Arrington was so identified with the North Shore political establishment that few people remembered his downstate roots, Pensoneau writes.

He got into politics because he thought it would help his legal career. He ended up serving more than 25 years in the legislature.

*Powerhouse* doesn't offer

a psychological portrait of Arrington (Pensoneau concentrates far more on "what" than on "why"), but it's not hard to see that Arrington had a need to dominate. He dominated his own circumstances to escape a life of back-breaking work. He dominated the legal world to build a fortune. Once he entered the General Assembly in January 1945, he needed to dominate there, too.

He did. Arrington was smart, shrewd and hardworking. In the state Senate, he grew from unseen "mushroom" to fierce committee chairman to de facto president to, in 1965, the actual president. Along the way, he made a huge contribution to

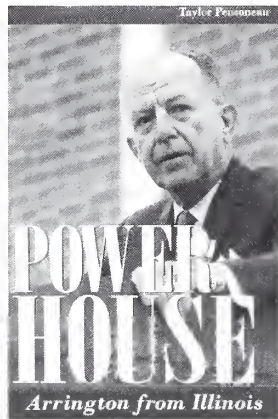
modernizing state government.

Arrington helped set up the Legislative Audit Commission as a watchdog over the executive branch. His constant push to cut welfare costs led to the creation of a separate Department of Public Aid. He helped establish the Firearm Owner's Identification Card. He co-sponsored legislation creating the Department of Children and Family Services. He was key to establishing the legislature's fall veto session and annual spring sessions, rather than sessions that met every two years.

Another change was less formal but perhaps more important in the long run: Arrington introduced legislative staffers to the General Assembly. Before Arrington, lawmakers were largely on their own to study issues, analyze legislation, even answer the phone, Pensoneau explains. It's hard to imagine now, when some lawmakers are unable to field the simplest questions about their bills without having an aide whisper the answer.

Arrington believed legislators were outgunned by the professionals working for the governor. He changed that by adding interns and, at his own expense, a handful of full-time staff. He used them to research and write legislation. He demanded their attendance at 7 a.m. breakfast meetings to plan the day. He used them as his eyes and ears at the bars each night.

Arrington managed to elevate the General Assembly's role in state government, putting it on more even footing with the governor. But it's possible that his tight control and his introduction of staff, who ultimately owe their jobs to the leaders, set



the stage for the dominance that leaders exert today over rank-and-file lawmakers.

*Powerhouse* really comes to life when those staffers — “Arrington’s Army” — reminisce about the man they knew. They gauged Arrington’s anger by how violently he was chewing on his cigar. They watched him quietly dominate meetings even when he wasn’t the chairman. They watched in awe as he told off Mayor Richard J. Daley with an angry “You don’t impress me one bit!” They gratefully accepted his loans and advice on planning their financial futures.

Arrington crossed paths with people who would play vital roles in Illinois politics for years to come — and in some cases still do. He clashed with Daley, with Paul Simon, with Alan Dixon. Jim Edgar was an aide on one side; Dawn Clark Netsch was an aide on the other side. He decided not to run for Congress, opening the door for Donald Rumsfeld to go to Washington. Arthur Swanson served in the legislature with Arrington and ended up enmeshed in George Ryan’s scandals. Doug Kane was a staffer, and he’s now a budget consultant for Blagojevich.

The key moment of his legislative career came in 1969, when newly elected Republican Gov. Richard Ogilvie informed Arrington that he planned to push for the creation of a state income tax. “What fool in the legislature do you think you are going to get to sponsor the bill?” Arrington asked. Ogilvie had a short but stunning reply: “You, Russ.”

Arrington had spent years cutting state spending and fighting efforts to create an income tax, yet he soon agreed to throw himself behind Ogilvie’s plan. Pensoneau never quite manages to explain what changed his mind. Arrington clearly wasn’t happy about the situation. He was sullen and sluggish, complaining of an upset stomach. But he told people he had to “live up to my responsibility as a legislative leader” and put an end to the state’s habit of lurching from one budget crisis to the next.

Arrington sponsored the bill. He brought others on board through endless talks and cajoling. He helped maneuver it through a forest of demands and objections, fine-tuning the proposal until it could pass, barely.

The reward for his work was losing the Senate, which Republicans had

controlled for 30 years. And then, in 1972, they lost the governor’s mansion, too. That’s the part Blagojevich and Jones might want to keep in mind as they try to impose \$8.6 billion in new business taxes, dwarfing any other tax increase in Illinois history.

The parallels are easy to spot. A governor and Senate president team up. Their party controls both legislative chambers. They strike early in the governor’s term, as far away from an election as possible. They link the increase to feel-good programs (education and health care today, education and highways back then).

Both teams even faced alternative plans to complicate their efforts. Blagojevich and Jones have to worry about the “tax swap” idea gaining momentum as the fairer, more responsible tax plan. Ogilvie and Arrington, who were proposing that individuals and corporations pay the same tax rate, had to deal with lawmakers refusing to go along unless corporations paid more. Eventually, Ogilvie and Arrington caved on the rates but managed to get the tax approved.

The political gamesmanship over the tax began immediately — during the vote itself. Democrats who initially supported the tax dropped off when it was clear their votes weren’t needed, leaving the final roll call unfairly loaded with GOP votes. When Ogilvie signed the bill, Republican leaders showed up. Democrats stayed away. They knew the

income tax was, as Pensoneau calls it, “political quicksand for the governor and his party.” Democrats successfully used the tax to oust Republican candidates, who got little political cover from their lists of all the great new services the tax would provide.

Could the proposed gross receipts tax be quicksand for Blagojevich and the Democrats? One important difference from 1969 is that this tax wouldn’t fall directly on the voters. It would be paid by businesses, and no one knows yet how much of it would be passed along to consumers, or how clear that pass-along would be. There would be a layer of insulation between the tax and voters, and that could be enough to protect officials from a backlash.

Another difference (though there’s no way to know whether it’s good or bad for officials) is that Blagojevich and Jones are trying to introduce a brand-new kind of tax. In 1969, everyone knew what an income tax was. They paid a federal version, other states had their own versions and people had talked for years about creating one in Illinois. Lawmakers and voters alike had long ago weighed the pros and cons.

But the gross receipts tax is a new concept. Most people had never even heard of it until Blagojevich raised the idea in March. Does that make it easier or harder for Blagojevich and Jones to drag lawmakers into the yes column? Does it sharpen the potential backlash or dull it because voters won’t know quite what to think?

Another noteworthy difference, for better or worse, is that Ogilvie and Arrington were relatively straightforward about their proposal. They thought state government needed more money to operate properly, and they proposed that everyone share the burden.

Blagojevich and Jones have a much more complicated message. They’re telling the public that the burden doesn’t have to be shared — that it can, and should, fall on businesses because they’ve been ducking their responsibilities for years. And they don’t quite admit state government needs the money to get back in the black. Instead, the emphasis, especially with Blagojevich, is on adding to government’s list of services by choosing to guarantee health insurance for

## EDITOR’S NOTE

Taylor Pensoneau, a member of the *Illinois Issues* Advisory Board, is also the author of *Governor Richard Ogilvie: In the Interest of the State*, which the *Chicago Sun-Times* called one of the 10 most notable political books of 1997. He is writing the chapters on Govs. George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich for *The Illinois Governors: Mostly Good and Competent*, published by *Illinois Issues*. He was a co-author of *Dan Walker: The Glory and the Tragedy*. *Powerhouse* was published by the American Literary Press. All net proceeds from the sales of the book will be donated to the Robert R. McCormick Boys & Girls Club.



all. Will the public accept the idea of doing a good deed if someone else is supposedly paying for it? Stay tuned.

After Republicans lost their Senate majority, the powerful Arrington faced a challenge to his leadership. He defeated his opponent but suffered a stroke in January 1971. Although Arrington

returned to the Statehouse nine months later, he never again played a major role there. He didn't seek re-election in 1972.

Pensoneau writes that Arrington is not a household name in Illinois because he was never elected governor and was never caught up in scandal. There's a lot of truth in that. This state tends to celebrate its

scoundrels and its tyrants, and Arrington was neither. Clearly, though, he was a powerhouse in shaping modern Illinois government. Today's officials would be smart to keep him in mind as they try to tinker with that shape. □

*Chris Wills is a correspondent for The Associated Press at the Illinois Statehouse.*

## Books

# THE WIND, AS ALWAYS

*Air currents are what sew the world together. Whatever human beings do, the wind carries the news and the consequences*

Essay by Robert Kuhn McGregor

Something has gone seriously wrong with this writing business. I have written a fair number of these essays for *Illinois Issues* over the past several years, and people have staggered to the conclusion that I write about politics. In some superficial fashion, this is understandable, I suppose.

The magazine mostly is devoted to political topics, and some of my own subjects might lead the unwary to believe I fit in. A few issues back, my theme was dirt, certainly a concept that lends itself to a political construction. This time I am supposed to write about wind; anyone who has spent much time at the state Capitol could be excused for thinking that a political commentary.

No, no, I understand how the lighthearted reader skipping here and there might get confused. What disturbs me is how people reading all of these essays with some care can still reach the conclusion that what I write is political. My politics has nothing to do with what gets printed in these pages.

I have worked as a professional historian for just about all my adult life. I have unlearned a great deal of idealism in consequence. If I have learned anything at all, it is that no idea, no concept — no matter how dangerous or stupid — ever goes away, and that human beings, even mostly mid-American ones, share very little in common. History can be carved up in an

almost infinite number of ways, developed to analyze experiences of gender, race, ethnicity, social structure, economics, politics, the military and countless other aspects of human life. The “consensus” that we fob off on our high school students is a dangerous illusion; one person's heritage is another's fairy tale or worse. To me, there is just one meaningful experience of history we all share, one foundation on which to build a common story of the past. We are, every one of us, residents of this earth, wholly dependent on its systems to provide the fuels, the energies that sustain our lives. That is the bedrock fact of history.

I do not care who you are, what ideas you hold, what beliefs you passionately defend, you must understand the absolute necessity of breathable air, potable water, productive earth. And you must know — without attaching fault or blame — that in our unheeding, undereducated self-confidence, we have done some damage to those very essences we need most.

I do not need to recite the long litany of poisoned waters, stained earths, besmudged vapors that loom on all our horizons; you know all about them. You joke fearfully about glowing in the dark, about drinking the river water that may well spark the inoperable cancer 15 years from now. You *know*. This is not some political game. Save for a few pathetic outcasts who have pared all emotion save greed and arrogance from

their worthless souls, we all care about the condition of our earth, in one way or another.

No, I do not write about politics. I write about our common environment.

The past year has proven very strange for central Illinois, speaking environmentally. In “normal” circumstances, nature does not intrude so much on our daily peregrinations. The environment is there, certainly — maize growing in hot sun on a flat land, too much rain, not enough. That is the background music to most of our lives, the weather just doing its thing, growing those plants while we buy and sell the goods and ideas that matter so much more to us. Wild nature, be it the sudden shock of the hurricane or the relentless presence of the brutal desert, occurs elsewhere, to other folk. We like to keep nature at arm's length, but in this past year it has come calling, masked in two very different yet closely related forms.

The agent is the wind.

If there is an elemental force in nature that we never think about except for dire emergency, wind has got to be it. The wind blows in some form four days out of five around here, or so it seems. We grasp the fundamentals of why: the uneven heating of the earth's surface, the formation of high pressure centers that pull air upwards, the low pressure that draws the air back to earth. Depending on location and the

relative intensity of the pressure gradients, we feel anything from the mild zephyr of a May afternoon to the bitter, breathtaking howls of a morning in March. Beyond that lies the real adventure, the deadly fear: the thunderstorms, the cyclones, the hurricanes and typhoons. Since Mr. Torricelli invented his barometer and began measuring air pressures back in 1643, we have come to know a good deal about how the wind works. Not enough, not nearly everything, but a good deal.

Poetically speaking, it is the wind that sews the world together. Seen from space, the seductive and endlessly entrancing masses of cloud, inevitably curved and wrapped around invisible sources of energy, reflect the global nature of weather patterns, reflect the activities of one earthly atmosphere in continual motion. Today's low pressure over the Gulf of California is Tuesday's tempest in Rhode Island. It was

### *A review*

## **How air shapes land, life and myth**

When writing a review essay, I always try to adhere to the principle established by Henry David Thoreau: Mention the book somewhere. In this case I have fallen short, failing even to allude to the book that provoked this essay. This is something of a shame, as *Wind* is excellent, fully deserving of the John Burroughs Medal it received in 1999.

The author, Jan DeBlieu, lives on the Outer Banks of North Carolina's coast. The beauty of the island landscape enthalls, but elemental danger is an inescapable part of the idyllic picture: This is hurricane country. Confronted by the enduring power of the wind, DeBlieu set out to understand the force of air in all its aspects.

But this is not simply a story for the Atlantic Coast. Air moves across the face of the earth as a single system. As the author journeys here and there in a quest to more fully understand the wind's impact, the Illinois reader cannot help but develop a fuller understanding of the wind's inevitable presence, for both good and ill. From tornadoes to windmills, the air in motion is an essential ingredient in our lives, rather than a nuisance, another aspect of nature for us to conquer.

*Robert Kuhn McGregor*

the un pitying wind that swept away the good soils of Oklahoma in the 1930s, depositing fine dust in the halls of the nation's Capitol, spreading it the length and breadth of ships far out at sea.

The wind carries messages: the smell of apple blossoms and spring from orchards far away south, the odd odor of chocolate and corn syrup from factories east, the invisible radiation from nuclear tests conducted in far-off China. The messages may be far more subtle and perhaps discomfiting than we would like, but they are invariably honest and true. Whatever human beings do, the wind carries the news — and the consequences — to others of our kind.

The wind is the wind. A few of our number devote their lives to deciphering the air's behavior; most of us accept it as background, like the corn, and go about our lives. But air is life, and we are reminded of that, sometimes in nasty ways. In March of the year just past, an especially virulent tornado whistled through the middle of Springfield, packing the punch of a runaway freight train. Staring goggle-eyed at roofless hotels, flattened shops, wind-blown automobiles, one communal thought seemed to spring unbidden to every person's mind: Bless the fates no one was killed.

A small sampling of the usual backlash followed — what should have been done sooner, what should not have been done at all, who was at fault. (God was the answer from some quarters, but who were the sinners meriting such punishment?) For the far greater part, people simply shrugged their shoulders, rolled up their sleeves and got to work repairing the damage. Act of God, act of nature, the result was much the same. The only honest response was to accept and go on from there.

Looking back from the perspective of 15 calendar months, that freight train wind raises some intriguing questions. I am enough of a historian to know that this tornado followed a path eerily similar to the last violent twister, one that left a heartless path of destruction back in the 1950s. Folklore has it that tornadoes, formed by the violent clash of super-heated high and icy low pressures meeting above the prairies, established a regular path through the region long before anyone proclaimed it Illinois.

The tornado's flattened path became a preferred route for migrating animals (not much in the way), and later, people. And eventually, superhighways. It seems reasonably likely that Tornado Alley is more than a clever expression in some locales, that weather patterns can create the same freight train time and again. The next tornado is not a matter of if, but when.

Are we prepared to accept such a probability? When it comes to the weather, we tend to treat every bad experience as a unique experience, every storm as a freak. We invest our faith in the more typical experiences of life — a little sun, a little rain, no freight trains. Do we insist on building codes tested to withstand tornadic winds? Are there well-thought-out plans for dealing with catastrophe?

Such things are the responsibilities of politicians, we suggest, those driven individuals who weigh such responsibility in the scales of expense. Most Illinois settlements still do not have such precautions, no more than the Gulf Coast has prepared itself for the hurricane that is coming. Politicians generally bet against catastrophe.

But the environment is not in the least political; the wind is the wind. We hear a breeze sighing through the pines; we feel the current on our faces, a constant we refuse to recognize, to acknowledge. Every breath of air expresses the latent power capable of flattening the pine tree.

Can we harness that power then, put the wind to work in the service of humankind? To attempt an answer to this question is to venture into another oddly political world, laced with bitter dispute and angry recrimination. That is the world of energy production, where people fight about the wind.

The historical answer to the question of tapping the wind is a resounding yes, of course. Windmills have been around for a long time. They have pumped water from behind Holland's dikes for centuries. Don Quixote tilted at one. They have remained central to the landscapes of our arid American West for more than a century, bringing water out of the earth for parched herds of cattle. No one can seriously doubt that windmills capture a free and powerful source of energy. The question now is whether wind mills can be made to generate enough power to run your computer. And my computer. And



everyone else's computer. Can windmills provide significant energy to meaningfully supply the electricity-guzzlers of the 21st century?

At this stage of the political games people seem intent on playing, the answer is yes and no, maybe more yes than no. "Wind farms" have begun to appear here and there across the landscape, including one considerable expanse somewhere north of Springfield. As long ago as 1941, engineers produced individual turbines capable of cranking out 1,259 kilowatts of power — enough to illuminate a college campus at finals time. Like any other new technology, researchers have ventured down a few false alleys in the quest for greater capacity, but the trend has proven generally upward. Anchor enough wind turbines in a given place — some spot where winds are strong and steady — and you will derive commercially feasible amounts of energy.

The road has been less than smooth. One of the heaviest early investors in wind energy research was Enron, those same fine people who brought us the rolling California blackouts for the purpose of lining their pockets with cash. Add to this guilt-by-association the usual problems of harnessing natural energy: What happens when the wind does not blow; what happens when it blows an awful lot? Engineers have not yet discovered a good way to store the large amounts of excess energy a wind turbine might produce; like solar-generated electricity, such surplus increments would dissipate unused.

There are wilderness protection questions as well. The turbines are most often huge, three-bladed propellers; birds do not do well with them. Companies are slowly learning not to place wind farms in the path of critical migratory flyways, but that alleviates only a portion of the problem. Sheer appearance is one more issue — a wind farm may be fascinating, but it will never be lovely. Too often, the most strategic wind locations are in otherwise scenic valleys and along mountain ridges. One more way to clutter



Photograph by Barbara Janke

up a landscape in the name of energy.

For better or worse, middle-ground environmental lobbyists (read politicians) have determined that wind power is good for us. Given the range of alternatives — sulphur-laden coal, radiation-spewing nuclear plants, river-destructing dams — I can almost see their point. But certainly they are playing hardball politics to get that point across. In the past year — the year of the tornado, remember — the Sierra Club "persuaded" Springfield's City Water, Light and Power to purchase 120 megawatts of wind power from a variety of sources, mostly still under construction. The company does not even have to actually utilize the power; it can purchase and resell the energy. In return for this happy embrace of the eco-friendly, the Sierra Club has promised not to sue CWLP over construction of a new coal-burning power plant. A compromise of environmental values, if you will. This is just the kind of eco-compromise the Sierra Club does so well, muscling in with theoretically better energy alternatives, forcing them on the locals, agreeing to other dubious environmental practices in return. We have lost entire watersheds out west to this kind of compromise, and it is very difficult to see the value in it. Certainly the Sierra Club has not won friends and allies, and the gain for the environment is tiny to nonexistent.

Lobbyists and power companies play footsie, but the underlying question remains unanswered. Is wind power remotely practical? Can we make a fair attempt at finding out while we play this kind of game? The results may be another

half century in coming, and even then they may prove contradictory. How much of our already crumbling edifice of wildlife and scenery do we wish to sacrifice to whirling propellers? Are we rushing to the wind at the expense of more ecologically responsible solar and hydrogen alternatives? Can we answer honestly, playing at politics?

Oh, it is certainly possible to play politics with the environment, just as we play politics with race, with sex, with religion. Enron has proven that, and the Sierra

Club, too, along with every brand of American government you can name. Sell it, trade it, harness it, compromise it, uglify it, ruin it outright; we are more than capable of doing all these things. The one thing we cannot do is to change the laws of nature, the framework of physical interaction. The wind will blow, no matter what. The question is, what will the breezes carry?

If you love life (and most people do, no matter their politics), you have no real choice but to attend to what is riding on the wind. There is more to be learned from a glance at a tornado than a day at the Capitol; there is no compromise in a cyclone. On a daily basis we attempt to fool one another with compromise — we can poison the air just this much, construct our buildings just this cheaply, breathe in just this much radiation. We can and do lie to one another about these things; we play at policymaking, make believe that every destructive storm is the very last one ever, that the air's capacity for absorbing poisonous substances is infinite. There is money to be made in such lies, and we scramble to get more than our share. But a lie broadcast is not a truth created. The wind does not participate in politics.

The wind in all its forms, peaceful or perilous, will always be the wind. Given a choice, I would much prefer to simply sit on a rock and face the wind than to participate in the most delicate of political negotiations. The wind I can rely on. That much I know. □

*Robert Kulin McGregor, an environmental historian at the University of Illinois at Springfield, is a frequent contributor.*

## PEOPLE

### Conservation Foundation's new leader

Gregory Legan of Murphysboro is the new executive director of the Illinois Conservation Foundation, a 13-year-old agency designed to raise money to preserve and enhance the state's natural resources.



Gregory Legan

Legan previously was executive director of the John A. Logan College Foundation in rural Carterville. His other nonprofit work includes the Southern Illinois University Foundation in Carbondale and Purdue University in Indiana.

In the outdoor arena, he chaired the Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Day Committee, sat on the board of directors for the Youth Outdoor Education Foundation and was a hunting instructor with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

## QUOTABLES

“I will not raise taxes on people. I won’t do it today. I won’t do it tomorrow. I won’t do it next week, next month, next year, the third year or the fourth year.”

*Gov. Rod Blagojevich making it clear during a rare committee of the entire House last month that he won’t agree to raise state income or sales taxes. The House met to discuss the governor’s alternative call for a gross receipts tax on business.*

“Ben Franklin, one of the founders of our country, said there are two things inevitable in life: death and taxes. But Ben Franklin did not say that it’s inevitable to be taxed to death.”

*Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn making it clear during the same committee of the House that he doesn’t agree with the governor.*

## AWARDS

Vern Kleen, president of the Springfield chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society and longtime bird expert for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, received the society’s 2007 Conservationist of the Year award.

Kleen spent 30 years as an avian ecologist with the department before retiring in 2001. He has since hosted many hummingbird banding festivals — banding more than 1,200 hummingbirds this past year — and continued a statewide stamp collection project that he started in the 1980s to raise money for habitat conservation. Kleen also leads state and international field trips to bird and wildlife hotspots, including trips to the Amazon, the Galapagos Islands and Costa Rica.

“I’ve been to all the continents except Antarctica leading trips,” he says. “So I have to go there someday.”

All funds raised from the trips are donated to the group’s Land Acquisition Fund, which is used to establish more bird sanctuaries throughout the state. Together with the stamp and hummingbird projects, Kleen estimates he has raised more than \$75,000 for the fund.

Kleen says his proudest accomplishment was publishing *The Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas* in 2004. He was the primary author of the text, which uses data collected since 1986 to map the distribution and abundance of 183 bird species known to breed in Illinois.

“It’s a good resource to find out places for threatened and endangered species,” he says, “and where not to build stuff.”

• • •

Two veteran fishery biologists with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources received awards in April from the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

**Kenneth Russell**, a district fisheries biologist since 1962 and resident of Wataga in Knox County, earned the 2006 Spirit of the Shack Award, given to an individual who “epitomize[s] stewardship and dedication to fish and wildlife conservation” and exemplifies the ideals of the conservationist Aldo Leopold. The award’s name refers to the famous Wisconsin shack where Leopold found inspiration as a writer.

Known as a bluegill specialist, Russell samples lakes, monitors fish populations and helps improve pond fisheries in a five-county area.

**Wayne Herndon**, a 36-year field biologist from Forest City in Mason County, was named 2006 Fisheries Biologist of the Year. The association gives the honor to “the individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative towards the better understanding of fishes and their conservation.”

Herndon received the award for his work on floodplain restoration, data collection on muskie and the development of new fish control and stocking techniques.



Vern Kleen

## BIT

Taylorville’s **Rolland Tipsword**, retired judge and former Democratic state legislator, died April 5. He was 81. Born in Monticello, he graduated with honors from Northwestern University Law School in Evanston in 1951. He then served as clerk to Illinois Supreme Court Justice Harry Hershey before joining a private practice and serving as Christian County state’s attorney.

He served as state representative for 13 years before being elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1980. In 1983, he became circuit court judge for the 4th District, a post he held until 1993. He was active in the Masonic Fraternity and the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free & Accepted Masons of Illinois and was recognized for exceptional service with the Meritorious Service Award in 1975 and the honorary 33rd Degree, the highest, in 1977.



## Former Chicago schools chief off to New Orleans

Paul Vallas will lead New Orleans' public schools starting next month, according to the Louisiana Department of Education.

The Chicago native served as chief executive officer of the city's Public Schools system from 1995 to 2001. He ran for governor in 2002 but lost in the primary to now-two-term Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Vallas left for Philadelphia to become chief executive officer for the public schools.

While finishing up his work in Philadelphia, Vallas is serving as a consultant to Louisiana's Recovery School District until he starts there full time after July 1.

The Recovery School District oversaw a handful of underperforming schools before Hurricane Katrina devastated the area in August 2005. After the storms, the state legislature changed the law to include school districts that were academically unacceptable by federal standards under the No Child Left Behind law. That put more than 100 schools in the hands of the state, and they're all in New Orleans, says district press secretary Cheryl Michelet.

Part of Vallas' job will include working with school boards to return schools to local control, she says.

Prior to working for the Chicago Public Schools, Vallas served as Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley's budget director and as executive director of the former legislative Economic and Fiscal Commission.

## UPDATE

**Christopher Koch** advanced from interim to permanent state superintendent of education. The Illinois native has served with the Illinois State Board of Education since 1994.

## IMSA president retires to stir global innovation



Stephanie Pace Marshall

Stephanie Pace Marshall, founding president of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, retires from the school this month but is moving beyond state and national borders to promote innovation in teaching and learning methods.

The Illinois Math and Science Academy, created by the legislature in 1985, houses gifted high school students on campus and uses creative methods to teach problem solving skills. Marshall says it's no accident the school's alumni had a hand in designing the YouTube video production Web site, the NctScape news portal and Web browser and the PayPal online payment service for eBay.

She says while the academy is one of the best of the best and very competitive in comparison to traditional means of assessment, it may not be enough to help all students use imagination in solving problems they've never seen before.

The current educational landscape, she says, focuses on "competition and winning and fixing broken children as opposed to engaging them at the highest levels that they're capable of."

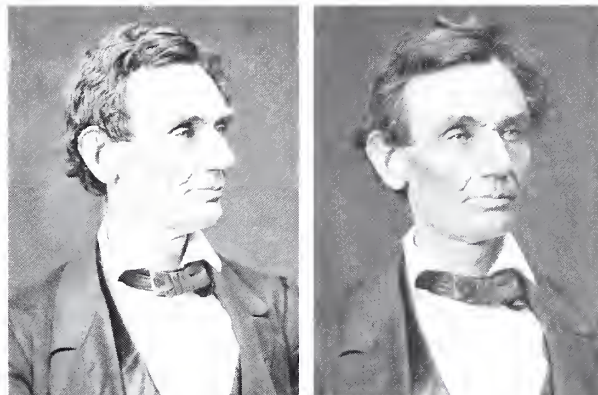
Pace says she intends to retire to do more work as a consultant, writer, researcher and mapmaker on more creative ways to shape minds and, in turn, the world's view of societal issues, including poverty, sustainability and health care.

"I'm going to be doing a lot of things, all of which are focused on creating conditions by design that liberate the goodness and genius of all children for the world," she says.

Her leadership earned recognition as one of the 100 best educators by the National Association of School Boards, as well as one of the most innovative educational leaders by the RJR Nabisco Corp. She also received the Distinguished Service Award from the U.S. Marine Corps, the Woman Extraordinaire Award by the International Women's Association and the Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award from the Boy Scouts of America.

## Limited Edition Hesler prints now available

Alexander Hesler's companion portraits of presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln, taken in Springfield on June 3, 1860, are stunning photographs. Exposed on 8" x 10" light-sensitive glass plates, the images are among the most eloquent and revealing of Illinois' greatest statesman before he left Springfield for Washington.



The Illinois State Historical Society acquired the glass plate positives (the original negatives are in the Smithsonian, damaged beyond repair) and has commissioned archive-quality prints of the Hesler portraits.

In anticipation of the Lincoln Bicentennial in 2009, The Society now offers a limited edition (500) of the 16" x 20" Hesler Lincoln Portraits (shown above), double matted and beautifully framed (choice of natural wood or gilt) with non-glare glass and adorned with a simple brass plate: *A. Lincoln, June 3, 1860*. The photographs are sold only in pairs for \$1,000, plus shipping and applicable sales tax for non-members.

Matted Hesler prints and walnut framed prints are also available at lesser prices.

**For more information about the Limited Edition Heslers, call 217-525-2781 today.**



## Fiscal health article on target: state in serious financial trouble

I am writing to applaud Charles Wheeler's recent article "Grim prognosis: Illinois' fiscal health is in a sorry state" (see *Illinois Issues*, April, page 18) regarding Illinois' chronic revenue shortfall and bleak fiscal outlook.

Over the past five years, I and many of my Senate colleagues, as well as respected state leaders and financial watchdog organizations, have warned that the Blagojevich Administration's borrow-and-spend policies, in conjunction with the burgeoning costs associated with the state pension systems and public health care, will have serious long-term economic consequences.

Mr. Wheeler's article substantiates what we have been saying: Illinois is in serious financial trouble and must act quickly to address the state's considerable debt. Failing to do so could have devastating results, from retiree pensions going unpaid to future tax increases and drastic

cuts to state programs down the road.

I have consistently advocated reassessing the structure of the state's pensions and public health care system, and I have repeatedly stated my interest in setting aside partisan politics in order to aggressively tackle this substantial problem.

Unfortunately, the governor's office continues to insist that the budget is balanced and the state's fiscal condition has been blown out of proportion. As state lawmakers head into the final month of the 2007 legislative session, we will be expected to vote on a budget that is currently based on the largest tax, spending and borrowing increase in state history.

As Mr. Wheeler accurately stated, without fiscal restraint and common sense reforms, Illinois' debt will only continue to grow — to the detriment of all future taxpayers and all Illinois citizens.

**Christine Radogno**  
State Senator  
Lemont



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Your comments are welcome. Please keep them brief (250 words). We reserve the right to excerpt them.

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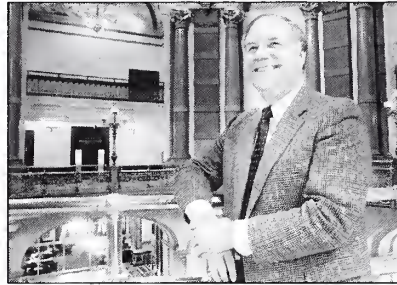
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Charles N. Wheeler III



## Growing population and shifting demographics should cheer Illinois Republicans

by Charles N. Wheeler III

**T**he party of Abraham Lincoln has fallen on hard times in the Land of Lincoln, but a recent U.S. Census report may hold a ray of hope for beleaguered Illinois Republicans.

The party's fortunes seemed to hit rock-bottom last November, when Democrats swept every statewide office, shutting the GOP out of the executive branch at the polls for the first time in 42 years. Moreover, the washout came just a dozen years after Republicans claimed all statewide offices.

Democrats also rocked in legislative races, picking up five Senate seats for a total of 37, probably the most Democratic senators ever (at least since 1880), and giving Senate President Emil Jones Jr. the party's first veto-proof majority in 70 years. In the House, Democrats added another seat, for a 66-52 edge.

As a result, legislative Republicans largely have been relegated to the sidelines since January, hoping that dysfunctional Democrats would blow the May 31 deadline for adjournment so that GOP lawmakers once again become relevant.

Against that dismal backdrop, the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent population estimates should be welcome news for Republicans. Bureau demographers pegged the state's population growth since the 2000 Census at slightly more than 412,000. The estimate is based on calculations of natural growth — births in excess of deaths — and net migration

---

***Most significant for GOP hopes, more than 98 percent of the estimated net growth, or almost 405,000 new residents, occurred in the five collar counties, historically Republican strongholds.***

— the number of people moving into the state as opposed to those leaving.

Most significant for GOP hopes, more than 98 percent of the estimated net growth, or almost 405,000 new residents, occurred in the five collar counties, historically Republican strongholds. The estimated growth included almost 166,000 in Will County — the 10th largest county increase in the nation — almost 90,000 in Kane County, more than 68,000 in Lake County, more than 52,000 in McHenry County and more than 28,000 in DuPage County. In addition, Kendall County, on the far western reaches of the metropolitan area, gained an estimated 34,000 residents, a 62 percent gain from the 2000 Census, the largest in the state and second highest in the nation.

In contrast, Chicago and Cook County lost almost 88,000 residents, census

statisticians reported. The net figure masks a more significant, ongoing trend: an exodus of residents from the city and its older, close-in suburbs, many of them to outer suburbs where homes are cheaper, schools better and the pace of living more relaxed. More than 600,000 people abandoned Cook County in the last half dozen years, census demographers calculated. Offsetting the outbound trend was a gain of almost 275,000 people born outside the United States, as well as some 240,000 more births than deaths.

The 2006 estimates continue a demographic pattern that's been in place since the end of World War II. Suburban Chicago's population stood at 1.5 million in 1950, less than that of the 96 downstate counties. By 2000, the roles were reversed, with suburban population counted at 5.2 million, some 900,000 more than downstate. The latest estimates push the number of suburbanites to more than 5.6 million, about 44 percent of all Illinoisans.

Conventional wisdom suggests the suburban growth should help GOP chances, given the long history of the suburbs — especially the collar counties — backing Republican candidates. However, four of the five Senate seats Democrats picked up in November are in the suburbs, and three include collar county territory never before represented by a Democrat in the Senate — the 31st in Lake County, the 22nd in northwest

Cook and northeast Kane County and the 42nd, mostly in southeastern Kane and western Will County. The other suburban district takes in a chunk of northwest Cook County that's been a GOP bastion since the Great Depression. (The fifth district lies mostly in Champaign County, which last sent a Democrat to the Senate in 1936.)

A key factor Democrats exploited to conquer new territory was the growing number of Latino voters, especially in the Elgin and Aurora areas, the population centers of the 22nd and 42nd districts, respectively, each of which counted roughly a quarter of its voting age population as Hispanic in 2000.

Since then, the number of Latinos has grown by about a quarter in both districts, according to a study by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Similar growth has occurred in other suburban areas, according to the coalition, which is working for full inclusion of immigrants into Illinois society.

Overall, the study found the number

## ***The growing number of potential Latino voters poses both opportunity and challenge for the GOP.***

of Hispanic immigrants jumped by more than 276,000, while the number of Asian immigrants grew by more than 90,000, with a healthy chunk of the growth occurring in the suburbs.

While many of the immigrants are not U.S. citizens, and thus cannot vote, the number of naturalized citizens has grown about 17 percent since 2000, according to the study, with the most dramatic percentage growth occurring in districts now held by GOP lawmakers.

The growing number of potential Latino voters poses both opportunity and challenge for the GOP. Although only

about 20 percent of Hispanics identify themselves as Republicans in national surveys, President George W. Bush claimed about 40 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2004. But the hard-line stance on immigration taken by conservative Republicans in Congress may have undercut any permanent GOP gains: Just 9 percent of respondents said the Republican Party had more concern than Democrats for Hispanics, while 37 percent picked the Democratic Party, in a 2006 national survey of Latinos by the Pew Hispanic Center.

Illinois Republicans don't seem ready to contest that perception; certainly, putting 40 "no" votes on the House board against an eminently sensible proposal to allow illegal immigrants to get driving certificates won't win many Hispanic votes. And if Republicans can't make inroads into that rapidly growing demographic, they probably haven't yet bottomed out. □

*Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.*

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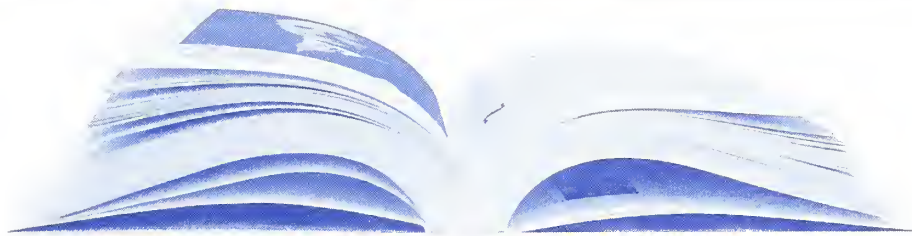
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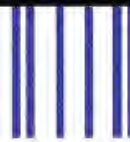
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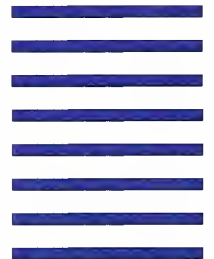
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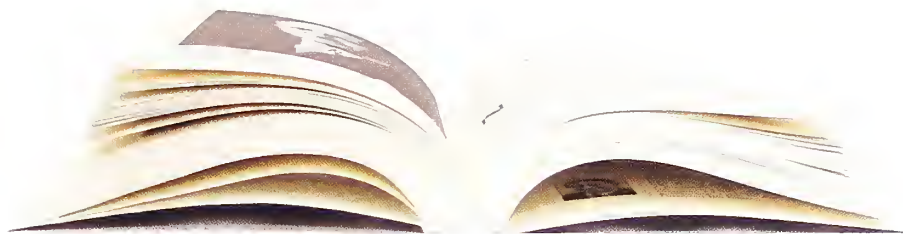
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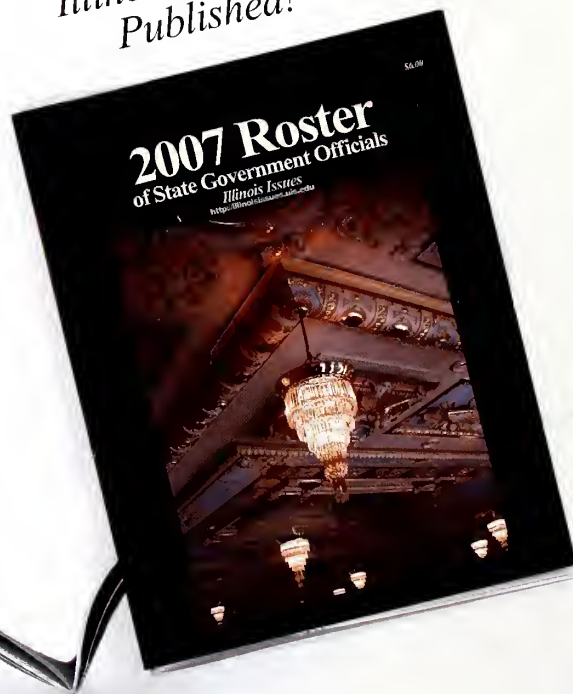
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